

SAINT PAULS.

MARCH, 1868.

ALL FOR GREED.

CHAPTER XVII.

IS HE MAD ?

Yes, indeed, Monsieur le Curé was sorely perplexed. The more he thought of it the more he felt persuaded that there was something beyond mental derangement in old Prosper's behaviour. Of proof of this, when the Curé came to cross-examine himself as to what he had actually seen and heard, he could find none. Prosper had always been a strange, gloomy man, weak-witted and superstitious, and nothing was more likely than that what had happened since his master's death should have completely upset his reasoning faculties. Any doctor accustomed to treat lunatics would regard it as quite an ordinary case; and yet, in spite of this, the Curé felt that there was more and worse in it than this came to, and the thought pursued and haunted him day and night.

In order to recall more clearly to his mind all the minutest circumstances connected with the murder of Martin Prévost, the Curé contrived, very ingeniously as he thought, to provoke conversation upon that subject with all those who had at the time been called upon to investigate the case. From all that he could gather by talking to the Maire, and the Juge de Paix, and the Doctor, and the Brigadier de Gendarmerie, never was a fact more satisfactorily established than that the murder of Martin Prévost was committed by some one from without,—some one whose mere object was to rob the old man of his money, and who had successfully escaped all pursuit.

As to Prosper Morel,—beyond the fact that had led to his arrest, namely, the fact of his having a short time previously vowed vengeance upon his master for an offence which was shown to have been condoned and forgotten,—beyond that one fact, nothing in all the evidence collected pointed at him; and, on the contrary, the whole of that evidence had so thoroughly excluded any notion of his culpa-

bility, that his preventive imprisonment was a subject of regret to every one; for it was generally supposed that it had had a fatal effect upon the old Breton's mind and health.

The incident which had, at the time, struck every one as alone likely to afford a clue to the criminal, had remained wholly unfathomable. The footsteps, namely, which led from the house to the garden, and ceased on the edge of the little stream, or rather ditch, close to the Cholet high road, had never been made to coincide with boot or shoe wearable by any individual connected far or near with old Prévost or his house.

"I know what I have thought sometimes since then," said one day the Brigadier de Gendarmerie, in a moment of supreme confidence; "but one never likes to cast a suspicion on any one;—above all, when one belongs to the Executive Authority!" And "Monsieur Frédéric" drew himself up majestically.

"Did you suspect any one in D——, then?" asked the Curé, with a shudder.

"At the time, no," was the reply; "but since, I have often thought that——" he paused. "Well, Monsieur le Curé, to you I don't mind confiding my secret thoughts. If I had been Monsieur le Juge d'Instruction, I would have had that sharper, Léon Duprez, arrested." And as he uttered these last words he lowered his voice.

"Léon Duprez?" echoed the Curé, with a start of surprise; "why, what could possibly make you suspect him?"

"Nothing, Monsieur le Curé; I repeat it, at the time, nothing; but have you never reflected that he left D—— immediately after the crime, and we now know under what circumstances he left it, and what a pressing need he must have been under at that identical moment for a few thousand francs?"

The Curé stared at the gendarme in mute astonishment.

"Yes," continued the latter; "my suspicion is so strong, that if the scoundrel were not away in Australia, if he were anywhere within my reach, I would now do everything in my power to get him arrested, so persuaded do I feel that, in some way or other, he had to do with the murder of old Monsieur Prévost."

This was a totally new light to the Curé, and only contributed to perplex him more and more; and, strange to say, instead of delivering him from all preoccupation as far as the woodcutter was concerned, it only made those preoccupations more complicated and less avoidable. What did the Breton mean when he raved about "the other"? Who was that "other"?

Though on the day of his strange interview with Prosper Morel, up in the woods, the Curé had ended,—after the bûcheron had regained his senses,—by calming the old man's agitation, and inducing him to listen to him quietly enough, still he had not advanced one step in the direction of any practical discovery. He had talked to Prosper for

nearly an hour, and could not avoid thinking he had done him good ; but the principal sign of improvement on the woodcutter's part was afforded by silence.

When once Prosper had been brought to look upon the Curé as a friend, and to acknowledge him in the flesh as his spiritual pastor, a certain load appeared to be taken off his mind,—a certain dread to be mitigated. By degrees, as the Curé spoke and advised, and tried to soothe and comfort him, Prosper seemed to undergo a species of physical relaxation ; his nerves ceased their over-tension, he stretched his arms and legs as people do after long illness and fever, and closed his eyes frequently and as with a sensation of relief.

These signs induced the Curé, while Prosper was present, to incline towards the belief that the old man was merely a victim to temporary insanity, or simply hallucination brought on by the tragic events with which he had been indirectly connected, and kept up by the gloom of his solitary life. But when he reflected upon Prosper's conduct, and recurred to his manner, to his look, to the tone of his voice, an instinct awoke that would not be hushed—an instinct that for ever told him there was more in all this than madness.

All he had gained was, that the wretched old man had listened to him, and had seemingly comprehended what he had said. Naturally, after bringing the Breton to accept his interference, and to submit to his counsels, there was, according to the lights of a sincerely pious Catholic priest, but one course to which he could endeavour to lead him ;—to confess. He could teach him no other lesson save that only one : "Repent, confess, and thy sins shall be forgiven thee." The Curé could teach him no other lesson, and that he taught him.

The woodcutter listened in silence, but he more than once muttered to himself, "Confess ! confess !" and he shivered as with a fit of ague.

"And thy sins shall be forgiven thee," slowly and impressively added the priest.

But further than that he did not get.

Unfortunately, in small places like D——, nothing can be kept secret, and a distorted account of the Curé's visit to old Prosper's abode began to circulate amongst the gossips. Whence did it come ? Who knows ? Perhaps from the brigadier—perhaps from old Lise, "*Monsieur le Curé's Lise*," to whom, after fifteen years passed under the same roof, her master did now and then just hint that he was troubled or perplexed. However, circulate the story did, and with so many embellishments, that the old Breton was transformed into an object of popular curiosity, and, as the days were fine and beginning to lengthen, knots of mischievous boys would troop off into the woods and organise expeditions to "*La Chapelle à Prosper*," as they termed it ; and the old man's extraordinary demeanour, his "*mummeries and antics*," as they called them, came to be a grand subject of diversion for the godless crew.

But the behaviour of the bûcheron was altered now. Instead of stalking about and chaunting Psalms and Litanies, as he had been used to do, he would sit for hours together, with closed eyes, his chin resting on his clasped hands, and his elbows on his knees. He appeared absorbed in meditation. He was perfectly harmless, and sought in no way to punish his youthful tormentors, but almost seemed to look upon them as a part of the penance he was doomed to undergo. When he believed himself most alone he would suddenly hear a mocking voice calling him by name, and as he turned round, a curly pate, or a smudgy visage, would show itself from behind the tree-stems or the bushes, and grin and make faces at him. They popped out upon him on all sides, dogged his steps, hopped across his path, and when they had found that he opposed no resistance to their tricks, they, with all the cowardice of "little-boy" nature, set to work to torment him systematically. Nor was it only the very small imps who indulged in this occupation. Their example was soon followed by the lads of fifteen or sixteen, and to these were also too often added the lazy loiterers who, in small provincial towns, have "nothing particular" to do except lounge away their afternoons at the "café," reading the "Siècle."

The great amusement was to call upon the woodcutter to confess. First one, and then another, would jump out of the brushwood, and cry out:

"Why don't you go to confession, Prosper?"

"You had better confess!" would add a third.

"If you'll only confess to me, Prosper, I'll give you absolution at once," would observe a fourth.

And the effect was invariably the same. The man listened silently, cast a haggard look around,—very much the look of a frightened animal,—and then rose, and with shambling gait went up to his blackened board behind the shed, and began to write upon it broken and half-illegible sentences in white chalk. Once established at this work, nothing disturbed him more. Hours would elapse, and he would go on alternately rubbing out words already written, and writing fresh ones in their place.

Day after day people talked of the bûcheron's madness; and at market, and at the café, it was a common subject of discourse; but the Curé was more than ever perplexed, and uneasy in his mind.

"It is a very extraordinary case this of Prosper Morel's," said he one day to young Morville, whom he met accidentally walking towards the High Street of D——; "very extraordinary and perplexing."

"I see nothing in it either very extraordinary or very perplexing," replied Raoul calmly. "The old man's head was always a weak one; what has passed has fairly turned it,—as it well might,—and your own

sermon of the Fête des Morts has supplied the one particular image to which the diseased brain has clung ever since. Such cases are far more frequent than you fancy; above all, with such races as those Bas-Bretons,—gloomy, and easily led towards fixed ideas."

"Raoul," said the Curé, after a few steps taken side by side in silence; "old Prosper is no more mad than you or I are. That is my conviction."

Young Morville expressed his entire dissent from the Curé's opinion, and they again walked on together in silence till they reached the part of the street just opposite La Maison Prévost. "Good-bye, Raoul," said the Curé, with a slight touch of sadness. "I am going in there. Good-bye; I have seen but little of you since you came. I hardly think you have come once to the Presbytere."

"If you knew what a state my father was in, you would, perhaps, excuse me," rejoined the young man. "I really do not know even now what decision to take. He will probably never recover, and my month's congé is nearly up."

"And then you must go back to Paris?" remarked the Curé. "Or have you any chance of lengthening your leave?"

"I fear not. I have only a week left. I wish, instead of Paris, I were going to Australia." The last words were uttered in a tone of great dejection.

"To Australia?" echoed the Curé, with a start. "Why Australia?"

"Only because it is so much farther off," said young Morville. But there was a bitterness in the look with which he accompanied the words, and altogether an air about him that the Curé could not account for, and that he disliked.

They separated, and Monsieur le Curé, crossing over to La Maison Prévost, told Madame Jean, when she opened the door, that it was absolutely necessary he should see Monsieur Richard. "Of course he won't object to receiving you, but he is very nervous and weak to-day," was Madame Jean's reply, as she ushered the Curé into her master's room. Weak enough and nervous enough he looked, to be sure, as he rose from his fireside to greet the parish priest, and offer him the seat in the opposite corner.

"No, thank you," said the Curé. "I should faint from the heat. Your room is an oven. You should open the window, Monsieur Richard; such a temperature is enough to take all the strength out of you."

"I have none left in me, alas!" rejoined Monsieur Richard in a whining voice. "I get worse and worse, and I believe I shall be forced to change the air, and try Cannes or Hyères for a few weeks. My cough is so troublesome, my breathing so bad, and I cannot sleep."

"Fine weather will do much, my good Monsieur Richard, and we

shall soon be having that; but you must excuse me if I come to trouble you upon some very sad business, but where really you are the only person who can act. Touching old Prosper Morel——”

Monsieur Richard turned round towards the fire, and answered fractionally, “*Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!* how cruel everybody is! The poor old creature is mad, stark mad, and I will not have him molested with my consent. Do have him left alone. Do let him do what he likes; he can’t live long, and he hurts nobody.”

“Monsieur Richard,” continued the Curé, gravely—“Prosper is not mad; that is my deliberate conviction, and he ought, at all events, to be examined by some medical man.”

“Not mad, my dear Monsieur le Curé!” repeated Richard Prévost, peevishly. “Why, his madness is notorious,—is the talk of the town. What would be the use of a doctor?”

“The use of a doctor would be to define clearly what is the real mental condition of the man,” retorted the Curé. “If he is insane, he ought to be shut up and attended to; if he is not——”

“Well, what then?” inquired Monsieur Richard, almost angrily. “What then?”

“Why, then,” rejoined the Curé, slowly, “the case ought to be looked into in another way. Prosper is perfectly calm. All his vehemence has subsided, but he is under the impression of some horrible deed, and he persistently, and day after day, proclaims himself a murderer.” Monsieur Richard shrugged his shoulders, and threw two more logs on the fire. “Prosper’s behaviour is now such as, in my mind, to call for some notice from you, Monsieur Richard, as the nearest relative of the murdered man. He passes his days and nights in writing upon the board behind his strange abode up yonder, the confession of his guilt. Fifty times over you will see the words, ‘Prosper did it,’ written in large characters; and ‘God be merciful to Prosper, the murderer!’”

“And upon such evident marks of insanity as those, you would persecute a poor wretch of this kind?” retorted Richard Prévost.

“That is not all,” urged the Curé. “He invariably alludes to some one else,—says he was not alone,—says there was another person mixed up with him in the crime.”

“Monsieur le Curé,” said Richard Prévost, drawing himself closer into the fire, “all the circumstances of my poor uncle’s death were minutely investigated at the time, and if anything was proved, it was Prosper Morel’s innocence; and I will not have the poor old fellow’s last days tortured with my consent. That the murderer of my uncle escaped is clear. One day, perhaps, he may be discovered,—people say murderers always are,—but I should think it a positive crime to re-institute fresh proceedings now, upon no surer a basis than the ravings of a wretched idiot who has already lost his reason through our first ill-founded suspicions.”

The Curé argued and argued, but could make no way whatever against Monsieur Richard.

"So you will not take any further proceedings in this matter?" said the priest, when he rose to go.

"None whatever," answered Richard Prévost. "There has been misery enough. Let poor old Prosper be left in peace. He won't live long, probably."

As the Curé was passing out of the room, he turned round, with his hand still upon the door; "Remember my words, Monsieur Richard," he added gravely, "Prosper Morel is not mad."

CHAPTER XVIII.

ST. MARK'S DAY.

ONE thing was clear to every one, and that was, the alteration that had taken place in young Morville. He had used to be so gay and joyous, so en train, as the French say, so up to everything! and now he was absorbed and absent, looked exceedingly ill, and moved about as though oppressed by some overwhelming care. Far from seeking the society of any of the people in D——, he apparently avoided all society; for, as the Curé had truly remarked, he did not go near him, who had been from early youth his best and surest friend, and he neglected the family at the Château, where he had hitherto had a second home.

Monsieur de Vêrancœur did not spare his observations upon Raoul's conduct, and was for ever commenting upon it in a way that terribly alarmed and pained Vêvette. "It is the same with all those young fellows," the Vicomte would say; "the very moment they get up to Paris it's all over. They tumble into some mischief or other,—mostly some infamous woman at the bottom of it all, some Dame aux Camélias, or some drôlesse of the demi-monde, which is even worse; and then come the string of embarrassments and misfortunes, play, debts, and God knows what all. They borrow what they can't pay, and they know they can't; but that's no matter; they go on all the same, and hope some miracle will be performed in their favour; and the end of it all is, the ruin of papa and mamma and the whole family, who have to pay for the young gentleman's misdeeds. But when there is neither papa nor mamma nor family, the end is another one,—disgrace, or suicide, or both; mighty lucky when it isn't dishonour, or the Bagne for forgery: but it's always the same thing, and if ever I saw any one who bore all the marks of having got into a mess, it is Raoul."

And then the Vicomte usually wound up by some bitter remarks upon the people of the present day who go themselves, or send their sons, up to Paris to make money, and said how infinitely preferable was the

quiet life and honest mediocrity of the province, where your ancestors had lived and died before you! "It might be dull," opined the Vicomte self-righteously; "it might be humdrum, but it was honourable, and according to the traditions of old French ways and customs!"

Monsieur de Vêrancour never seemed to think it otherwise than "highly honourable" to contemplate the sale of your child to a man she despised; and such bargains formed part of what he thought the superior morality of provincial life.

Now, poor Vêvette was breaking her heart all this while, and suffering martyrdom in silence. What she heard whispered about her, and what her father said aloud, would have been nothing had her own heart not failed her. But her own heart had told her, long before others spoke, that something was wrong, very wrong, with Raoul. A girl, brought up as girls are in France, may sometimes love quickly, yet be very long before she knows that she loves. The everyday life of respectable families is singularly flat and monotonous, and helps to lead a girl on from the cradle to the grave in ignorance of what lay hidden in her soul. But if once the accident happen, if once the calm be broken,—beware!

And thus it had been with Vêvette; she had been true to her teachers so long as she could be so, so long as she lived their life instead of her own; but as soon as the measure of her suffering taught her the measure of her love, as soon as she knew beyond all doubt that she loved Raoul better than everything else upon earth, and that for his loss Paradise itself would not compensate, then the aspects and the aims and purports of her life changed, and she was another than the self she had hitherto been. Had any one about her really cared to discover what was passing in the poor child's physical and mental condition, the perturbation would have been easily seen. She had grown miserably thin from anxiety and sleeplessness, but her cheek had a flush and her eye had a brilliancy that mislead those uninterested in her happiness. The excitement within threw its fever-mantle round her, and they took it for bloom.

"How wonderfully well your sister looks," said the Vicomte to Felicie; "she is growing extremely handsome. I never saw her look so well, and she is so lively." "Yes," would answer the latter, "she is even too lively; she is restless and brusque; she was not used to be so, but I suppose it is one of the changes girls sometimes go through. It is very lucky she is not called upon to make a great sacrifice for others,—to immolate herself; for I do not think she would be equal to it. Vêvette is becoming self-willed; indeed, almost wilful." And so saying, Mademoiselle Felicie would sigh, and look full of compunction for her sister's sins.

On the 25th of April there was a kind of fête at D—. It was the feast of St. Marc, which had been time out of mind kept as a holiday in that locality, and at which it was customary that every one

in the neighbourhood should be present. The amusements of the fête were all grouped together in the fields that lay between D—— and the village of St. Philbert; and upon a piece of land visible from the terrace of the Château, and called the *Pré St. Mare*, were to be found all the usual attractions of such popular gatherings as these. There were the menageries, and the giants and dwarfs, and learned dogs, or pigs, or birds, and magicians, and Dutch toupies, and gingerbread-stalls; and there, also, was the space set aside for dancing, under the wide-spreading boughs of two enormous chestnut trees. When night came, all this was to be illuminated with coloured lamps, but the festivities of the night were left chiefly to the enjoyment of the lower orders, or to individuals of the masculine sex alone among their betters. The fashionable hour for attending the fête was late in the afternoon, from four to six or half-past,—what determined provincials still called before supper. At that hour all the notables were sure to be found congregating together round the roots of the chestnut trees, and either looking on at the dancers or taking part in the dance; for it was the custom that upon this occasion there should be a perfect confusion of ranks.

Monsieur le Maire and his spouse, and the Juge de Paix, and the notary, and all the other dignitaries of D——, had already appeared upon the *Pré St. Mare*, when the Vicomte was seen approaching with his two daughters and Monsieur le Curé, and followed by Richard Prévost and the doctor, who had been expressing his satisfaction at the improvement in Monsieur Richard's health. Besides these, there were several visitors from châteaux in the environs; and one gossip,—but then that was that mischievous woman Madame Joséphine le Vaillant, the wife of the Juge de Paix,—declared she had seen Monsieur de Champmorin lounging about.

However that may be, Félicie did assuredly look pretty and graceful enough to have been worth any suitor's while to woo. As to Vévette, her beauty took people by surprise, for they were not used to "think anything" of her, as the common phrase runs, and it was strange to be positively dazzled by what you have never been taught to regard as a light.

The sisters were dressed nearly alike, excepting only that the elder wore blue, and the younger pink ribbons. Both had on white dresses and straw hats; and whilst the soft colours of her blue streamers harmonised so delightfully with Félicie's delicate even complexion, and light, wavy, chestnut hair, that you could not help seeing she had studied her effects, the rosy hue of Vévette's trimmings, that would have been so set off by her thick flaxen tresses, paled under the damask flush of her burning cheek and the scarlet of her unquiet lip.

It was a general remark how much better poor Monsieur Richard looked, and everybody seemed glad thereof; for,—excepting the

purchase of the little carriage from Tours,—Richard Prévost had given no sign of enjoying his wealth, and his weak health was such an obstacle to his ever thoroughly enjoying it, that his neighbours were pleased with him, and patronised him, and morally patted him on the back.

When the usual observations on the weather, and the fact of this being the very finest St. Marc ever remembered, were at an end, one of the first subjects of general conversation was the insanity of old Prosper.

"I really am tired to death of hearing that poor unfortunate old creature talked of incessantly," said Félicie. "It is precisely what is so odious in provincial life; one never hears the last of anything, however trivial or unimportant it may happen to be." This remark had been made to Monsieur le Curé and Richard Prévost, who were both standing beside Mademoiselle de Vrancœur when she spoke. But it was also heard by Monsieur le Maire, who by no means agreed in this system of disparaging the province.

"It is possible, mademoiselle," said he, "that in a great centre like Paris crime itself may pass unnoticed, but I am old-fashioned enough to prefer provincial ways, and not to quarrel with what after all only proves an extreme susceptibility to the state of public morality;" and then he, too, launched out into a tirade about the old French ways and customs, and "tradition," and drew from it all the plain inference that crime was the daily bread of the Parisians.

"Crime! my dear sir," retorted Félicie, with that peculiar mixture of contempt and condescension she sometimes assumed, "but there is no question of crime in all this; it is a question only of insanity, and the poor old man up yonder will be probably worried to death by the gossips of D——."

"I assure you, mademoiselle," persisted the Maire, "it is a most extraordinary case, if all that is reported be true."

The Curé and Richard Prévost had left the little group to speak to some fresh arrivals from St. Philbert, and the Vicomte, who had rejoined his daughters, now took part in the conversation. "It really does seem to me," said he, "that what it is the fashion now to call the public, does, as usual, meddle most impertinently in what does not concern it. Surely as long as the one person who is alone entitled to interfere remains silent, no one else has any right to raise his voice. If Monsieur Richard is convinced of that miserable old man's innocence, whose business can it possibly be to accuse or suspect him?" But the Maire was inclined to support the cause of what he called public justice, and he was beginning to argue the point with the Vicomte, when the band charged with the musical department of the fête plunged with such diabolical energy into a contre-danse, that no more talk was just then practicable.

Monsieur le Maire requested the honour of Mademoiselle Félicie's

hand, whilst,—the Mairesse being infirm and unable to dance,—Monsieur de Verancour performed vis-à-vis to them with a very portly and consequential personage, Madame Valentin, the grocer's wife, out and out the richest bourgeoisie in D——, and reputed to entertain the most advanced opinions both in religion and politics. It had even been whispered that Madame Valentin was encouraging her husband to lend money to a certain lawyer of Republican tendencies, who dreamed of setting up a liberal newspaper, to be called *le Drapeau du Département*, with a view to waging war upon the *Préfet's* pet organ. However, notwithstanding her political bias, the *epicier's* spouse seemed well pleased with her cavalier, for she laughed with all her teeth, which were fine, as she ducked down through the *chaîne Anglaise*, and came back with evident glee to her partner after an *en avant deux*.

Meanwhile our friend Madame Jean had been led forth among the side couples by the brigadier, who was observed invariably to encircle her waist with his arm and perform a *pirouette à la militaire* with her, each time that the figure of the quadrille placed him face to face with his partner. "She won't marry him any more for all that," whispered the lanky over-grown son of the *Juge de Paix* to *Mère Jubine's* Louison, with whom he was dancing.

But Louison was busy admiring Monsieur Richard.

Yes! there was some one for whom Richard *Prévost* was not "poor Monsieur Richard;" some one for whom he was a grand gentleman, and the type of all elegance and fashion!

As we have said, Richard *Prévost* was not ill-looking; he appeared to be weakly,—that was all,—and was pre-eminently what the Provençal terms "not much of a man;" but for the old washerwoman's daughter, herself the very handsomest girl of her class in D——, this very delicacy was refinement; and Monsieur Richard, with his blond hair elaborately curled by the *coiffeur*, and his glossy whiskers, his blue cravat, and pale lilac kid gloves, his superb watch-chain, and with clouds of perfume over all, was the very finest gentleman she had ever seen, or would ever have a chance of seeing. And so *Mère Jubine's* Louison was all eyes for Monsieur Richard, and paid no attention to what the pale-faced lanky son of the *Juge de Paix* was saying to her about Madame Jean and her military lover.

Just before the *contre-danse* had begun, Raoul de Morville had passed close to the group where the *Vicomte* and his daughters were standing. Greetings had been exchanged, and as Monsieur le Maire carried off *Félicie* as his partner, *Vévette* had turned round as if with a sudden impulse;—"Have you forsworn dancing, Raoul?" she asked, trying to smile very gaily. "We used always to dance together at the St. Marc when we were children."

"Shall we do so now?" was the answer; and Raoul went towards the dancers with *Vévette* on his arm.

While they danced together, they never spoke once, but once their hands met; hers lingered in his, and with that touch all words were made superfluous.

When the contre-danse was over, they were for a few minutes separated from the crowd. "Why have you never been near us?" inquired Vêvette in a low tone. "Have you forgotten us?"

"Forgotten you, Vêvette!" The way in which the words were uttered forced her to look at Raoul, and when their eyes had met she had no further need to be reassured.

"Then, Raoul," she added, taking courage, "what is the reason you keep away? What has happened?"

"Oh, Vêvette," he rejoined, with an accent of what seemed almost like despair, "so much has happened. Little enough, perhaps, for others, but for me everything;" and then he paused, while she looked and listened in breathless anxiety. "Suppose," he continued, "that all my hopes were at an end; that I could never look forward to our marriage. What would remain to me if I consented to live on, but to go away as far as I possibly could;—to put the seas between us? If all possible idea of your one day being mine had to be given up, my duty, however hard, would be to avoid you, and my last chance would be to fly to the end of the world—to New Zealand or Australia."

"No, Raoul, not that," was the rejoinder, but given in a voice he had never heard come from those lips before.

"Alas! and why not?" he asked mournfully.

"Because I should die if you did." They looked for a second steadfastly at each other; but the Vêvette who stood before Raoul now he had never known. All colour had flown from her lips and cheek, and the flame in her eyes had darkened, as it were; the truth had compelled her; the shy convent-bred girl was gone; and in her place was the passionate woman, really loving unto death.

It was not in masculine nature not for one instant to be enraptured at the avowal thus desperately made, and for one instant Raoul's whole countenance glowed with the glory of being loved. "Then, my own," he resumed fondly, "you must know what has happened, you must know all; you alone must decide what shall be our future. Come what will, in three days I must be in Paris, but——"

"In Paris, in three days?" gasped Vêvette.

"That must be, darling," he replied soothingly; "but that is a minor evil. I will tell you the cause of all my misery, and I swear to abide by your decision. Don't look so terrified, love; listen to me; I have——" But all further conversation was cut short by Monsieur le Maire, who strutted up to solicit the honour of Mademoiselle Vêvette's hand.

When that quadrille was over, the eternal topic of old Prosper Morel was recurred to, for the benefit of a visitor at a neighbouring

château to whom the entire story was new. "Do you know, Monsieur le Vicomte," urged Monsieur le Maire, harking back to his old argument of "public justice,"—"Do you know that what Joseph le Vaillant tells is passing strange all the same?"

"Oh! so you've been inspecting poor old Prosper, have you?" asked Monsieur de Vêrancour, with a supercilious glance at the Juge de Paix's son.

"I went up there yesterday," replied the lanky youth.

"Well, and what did you see that was so wonderful?"

"Oh, only Prosper's drawings, and the same words over and over, 'Prosper did it,' and then the date, '14th of October.' His new mania is to draw a kind of figure of a guillotine with three great capital letters under it, a P, an M, and an R. Always these three same; and sometimes they stand under a guillotine, sometimes flames are pictured under them: but always these three letters are repeated; and over the guillotine he mostly writes, 'Expiation!' And then he sits down before the drawing and looks at it till your flesh creeps as you look at him. Is not that a queer thing, Monsieur le Vicomte?"

"An M, that's Morel," said Monsieur de Vêrancour, "and P, that's Prosper—but what's R for?"

"Well, perhaps Retribution!" opined the Juge de Paix.

"I will go up in a day or two and see to all this myself," said Monsieur le Maire. "I can't go to-morrow, but I will positively go the day after."

The Vicomte shrugged his shoulders.

"Poor devil!" said he, "they'll torture him to death."

"I incline to think the Maire is quite right," observed the Curé gravely. "I can't help believing there is more in all this than you fancy."

CHAPTER XIX.

PROSPER'S ARREST.

Upon the face of it was there enough to account for Raoul de Morville's sore depression of spirits? That question touches the individual appreciation of suffering which is different in each human being. What to one is but a feather, may to the other be a weight beneath which he is crushed. If young Morville's past life, and the hopes upon which his whole heart had centred, be taken into consideration, it is certain that he had good cause to feel exceedingly unhappy.

If the circumstances wherewith love is surrounded in different countries be well examined, it will be seen that nothing can be more various than the aspects of the passion which many people falsely believe to be "the same everywhere."

If a man without fortune love a girl without a farthing, in England,

need he despair? No! for he has recourses open to him: he can work and win her, he can emigrate to one of those many lands where English is spoken, and by dint of toil, time, and endurance, it is more than probable he may end by gaining enough to enable him to unite himself to her without whom life seems to him worthless. At all events he has society and public opinion on his side. For his energy and for her constancy everybody will think higher of the couple who wish to marry for love.

But not so in France. In the first place, the man who, without money, wishes to gain it in order to marry the woman he has chosen, has a marvellously small choice of means whereby to achieve his aim. If he has financial aptitudes, no scruples, and great luck, he may by some stroke on the bourse, in which he has risked honour,—in case of failure,—achieve fortune; but the man capable of that is mostly a man incapable of the devotion we suppose him setting out to serve. For a chivalrous minded man,—and the man who resolves to win the girl he loves is that,—it is hard to see any resource in France. How he is to achieve independence in a country where every single field for activity, large or small, is railed in and set aside, and where nothing is open to individual energy, it is hard to see; but what is worse is, that he has society, and the opinion of all the men and women in it, against him. He must do whatever he does without ever allowing his motive to be guessed, or he is lost. His friends would set him down for a fool, and the rest of the world for something near akin to a perturbator of general morality.

All that esteem, all that sympathetic encouragement which are so necessary to the man who has to fight a hard fight, are denied in France to the man who dreams of marrying for love. He becomes a species of Pariah, whom it is unsafe to let inside your doors. If he, being without money, chose to love a girl who has plenty, that is quite another thing. If he wins her, he will be applauded because the love can be denied. If a very rich man, on the other hand, be resolved to marry a woman who is poor, that again will be tolerated;—though not viewed so favourably as the preceding case, because it gives doubly a bad example; first, to rich sons of families who, independently of their parents, may take to marrying penniless wives, and next, to dowerless girls, who may nourish illusions and become dangerous to the peace of respectable families.

No! The fitness of things lies in the union of money with money. That is according to rule. What is so also, is the union of high birth with wealth. In this arrangement also there is a fitness pleasant to contemplate, for there is an exchange of valuables. Something is sold and something bought, and it is altogether a business transaction,—in which a Frenchman tells you you find “a guarantee!”

But in a marriage of poverty with poverty there is no “guarantee,” and the love which induces it is only an “aggravating circumstance.”

Now, Raoul's position was in this respect the worst of all possible positions. He had conceived the mad idea of winning by his own exertions the hand of a girl who was as poor as himself. He had no excuse, for he had been brought up with Félicie and Vêvette, and knew their pecuniary situation as well as he knew his own. Of course, if Mademoiselle Geneviève de Vêrancour shared his absurd notions, it was wholly and entirely his fault; for, unless he had forced them upon her, how should a "well-born" girl, educated in a convent too! ever entertain any idea so utterly wrong as that of marrying for love? All the blame would be Raoul's; and had he any, the remotest chance, of earning for himself the even relative independence that would enable him to aspire to the hand of his beloved?

Perhaps there had been a time, not far off, when he had thought that his hopes might be realised; but what were his present prospects? He had twelve hundred francs a year for working hard in a public office for eight hours a day! Sixty pounds per annum would not go far to maintain a wife, let alone children. And what were his other chances? Perhaps promotion in six or eight years, and a salary of seventy-five, or it might be a hundred pounds yearly;—for he had no "protection."

All this was disheartening enough, and Raoul was disheartened. He loved Vêvette with his whole heart and soul, and could see nothing in life worth having if she failed him. But he sickened at the notion of waiting for long years. He wanted Vêvette to be his now; now, while he and she were young, and that its first bloom was on their love. More even than the cheerlessness of his prospects he felt the hardness of being obliged to hide his one object in life as though it were a crime. As a man who lives for a passion unconnected with ambition or interest, Raoul was a man out of all communion with his fellow-countrymen; and, if you examine impartially his position, his nature, and his probable chances, you will perhaps see that he had some cause for apparent despair.

In three days he was to leave D——. When to return, and with what hopes? As he thought of this and this only, it is no wonder that he paid but little attention to the events which in D—— were marching on apace.

The day following the St. Marc, Monsieur le Maire could not, as he said, go and visit the old bûcheron, but the day after he did so, and his visit had a remarkable result! Monsieur le Maire was an early riser, and the clocks had not yet struck eight when he turned into the narrow path which, through the brushwood and brambles, led to the spot where Prosper Morel had erected his present abode. The dew was still heavy on the ground, and the damp under foot and over head made the place remarkably cheerless, let alone the gloom which was cast around it by its strange occupant.

When Monsieur le Maire reached the spot on which stood the shed called *La Chapelle à Prosper*, there was no sign of any inhabi-

tant, no trace of the whereabouts of a living man. The Maire went straight up to the open side of the shed, and examined minutely all the ornaments and accessories of the chapel, and when he had done that, he, with the inquisitiveness of a civil functionary which the Curé had not, proceeded to an investigation of the other part of the rude dwelling. It had seemingly neither door nor window, but on raising the clumsy bit of hurdle-fence with which the opening was closed, you looked into a sort of den or hole in which it was clear that the woodcutter slept. In one corner was a heap of straw, hay, heather, and fern, all mixed up together, and covered over with a piece of coarse brown blanket, very much torn. It was more like the lair of a beast than the resting-place of a man, but it was evidently the old man's bed.

The Maire indulged in a protracted examination of the inside of the establishment, but found nothing to satisfy his curiosity. Of the occupant there was no sign. Leaving the apparent bed-chamber of the bûcheron, and closing it up again with the hurdle, the visitor passed to the outside of the shed and proceeded to study the hieroglyphics of the boarding at the back of it. Yes, truly enough, there they were;—the figures and images and signs of which so much had been told! There were the guillotines, and flames, and verses from the Psalms, and, over and over repeated, the words: "Prosper did it," and "God be merciful to the murderer!" And there stood again and again the letters P and M under the guillotine, over the flames; but of no other letter was there any trace; whether the letter R meant Retribution, as the Juge de Paix suggested, or not, was all one; for there was no letter R to be seen anywhere. To this Monsieur le Maire attached very little importance. It only made him form a rather low estimate of the accuracy of the Juge de Paix's lanky, overgrown boy, who in that respect simply shared in the mind of M. le Maire the disfavour attaching to boys in general, who were all in his opinion more or less stupid and inaccurate.

At last the Maire discovered Prosper Morel. But what was he doing?

Turning round the corner behind the part of the shed devoted to the chapel, the visitor came upon what looked at first like a heap of old clothes, but what turned out to be the Breton cowering down with hands and knees upon the ground, and apparently groping for something hidden upon, or under the earth. At sight of the intruder Prosper looked up, and turning round seated himself deliberately with his back to the shed and his two hands clasped across his knees. He neither looked angry nor surprised, but gazed intently at the Maire.

"You lead a solitary life out here," began the dignitary.

"No!" answered the Breton, "my life is peopled. I am never alone."

"Who is with you?" asked the Maire, determined to humour the old man.

"Who is with me?" he echoed. "The past, the past! I'm full of the past."

"Prosper," continued his interlocutor, "I have not come here to do you any harm, but to judge for myself of the strange reports that you encourage by your own conduct. Look at me, Prosper Morel, and try to tell me the real truth. What reason have you for saying the wild things you say? What interest have you in leading the whole town down there to believe that you have committed an awful crime?" While the Maire was speaking, Prosper's countenance underwent no change. All its life was as usual concentrated in the eyes, and these were fixed upon the speaker as though they would absorb his every feature. Slowly he rose, and his huge uncouth figure leaning against the wall, he put forth his arm and fastened his bony fingers upon the Maire's wrist.

"What reason?" he exclaimed; "what interest? What; can't you understand it? My soul! my soul! I want to save that. But that is how you are, you bourgeois, all of you! You go to church, but you don't believe; and you don't care for truth, God's truth, the eternal truth, by which we are saved or damned. You will take the life of an innocent creature, because you think he seems guilty, and you take no trouble to see whether he is so or not, and when real guilt,—the very truth of crime,—is brought before you, you won't recognise it, because it is not discovered by the agents of the law. Oh! Monsieur le Maire, Monsieur le Maire," went on the bûcheron with desperate earnestness, "we have souls; we really have souls, and we can save them."

"But, my good man," objected the other, now seriously inclined to believe in Prosper's insanity, "do you mean then, seriously, to declare that you murdered Martin Prévost?"

"This hand did the deed," replied the woodcutter, holding up his right hand and spreading its five fingers out to their utmost directly in the face of the Maire, who stepped back a pace or two. "Yes!" resumed the Breton, "this hand, but only this hand; not mind or will; only the hand!"

"And you hope for forgiveness by accusing yourself?" suggested his visitor.

"Hope! I am sure of it. I have confessed. I confess every day. Come with me!" and before he could resist it, the Maire found himself dragged before the boarding, on which Prosper pointed out to him his gloomy writings. "There," he said, "and there, and there! I hide nothing, I give all I have to purchase back my soul, and when the Lord has forgiven me, expiation will come. I wait, I wait! *De profundis clamavi ad te, Domine!*" And he crossed his hands on his breast and looked upwards fervently.

The Maire was now all but fully convinced of Prosper's insanity; and the latter caught at his conviction by some intuitive sense.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, with sudden animation; "that is so like you all. You don't believe what you don't know. Take care, Monsieur le Maire; take care! You don't believe a man has a soul; you don't believe he ought to give his life to save it. You wouldn't save yours with your life, Monsieur le Maire. Saint Thomas! Saint Thomas! they must touch, ere they believe. Well then, look here!"

Seizing hold of the Maire's arm he led him back to the spot where he had himself been discovered cowering down upon the ground. He went down upon both knees, displaced a few loose stones, took up with his nails a square sod of turf, cleared away some mould, and brought to view a small wooden box, the lid of which he opened without taking the box from its resting place. "There," he cried, "what do you see now?—golden Napoleons, and bank-notes, and papers, and a purse! There is all that was taken out of Monsieur's strong box when he was dead. There it lies;—all that you never could find; all that for which you were so certain he was killed, there it lies! Now you believe because now you understand. Oh! you wise, wise men! And you take to yourselves the right to punish and absolve! Help me to save my soul, Monsieur le Maire, help me to save my soul! For now you know I am the murderer of my master."

The Maire was convinced.

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That same day, the 27th of April, Prosper Morel was arrested by the Brigadier de Gendarmerie and his assistants in virtue of a proper warrant, and lodged provisionally in the jail at D——. He offered no resistance. On the contrary, a curious kind of elation seemed to inspire him, and he walked with a firm step between his captors, into the town of D——, a crucifix clasped with both hands upon his breast, and chanting as he went, in a loud voice, the Litanies for the Dead.

OUR PROGRAMME FOR THE LIBERALS.

AMONGST the many anecdotes related of Pius IX., it is recorded that on one occasion, when an enthusiastic devotee attempted to console him amidst his troubles by the remark that, after all, the Bark of St. Peter would never founder, the holy father replied, "La barca, no, ma il Barcajolo, si"—The boat was certain to ride out the storm, but the boatmen might well be washed overboard. A somewhat similar sentiment to that expressed in this Papal epigram would represent, not unfairly, the state of feeling with which many thoughtful English Liberals regard the prospects of their party. As to the perpetuity of those principles, which, for want of a better term, we must describe by the much abused name of the principles of progress, we entertain as absolute and unswerving a faith as ever zealot entertained in the indestructibility of the one orthodox creed. As long as human nature remains what it is, there will be a party of progress and a party opposed to change. The struggle, which in the old Persian theology was symbolised by the perpetual warfare between Ormuzd and Arimanes, is always going on in this as in every civilised country. The questions at issue between the contending parties vary from generation to generation, almost from year to year. The goal of one era is the starting-point of the next. The most bigoted Tories of the present day are infinitely more liberal in many practical respects than the Roundheads of two centuries ago. But for all that the men of the Commonwealth were fighting in the same cause with the Reformers of our own day. Future generations may, and will, apply to the men of our time, the test which, as Lord Macaulay stated, must be applied to the men of the Revolution. "The question," to quote the words of the most brilliant of English essayists, "with respect to them, is not where they were, but which way they were going. Were their faces set in the right or the wrong direction? Were they in the front or in the rear of their generation? Did they exert themselves to help onward the great movement of the human race or to stop it?" It is possible, it is even probable, that the verdict of history may convict the Liberals of our own day, as our judgment convicts those of a preceding era of many errors of judgment, of much narrowness of vision, of holding tenets inconsistent with the fundamental principles of Liberalism; but still this verdict will, we doubt not, decide that there were amongst us men whose faces were set in the right direction, who were in the front, not in the rear,

of their generation, who did exert themselves to help forward the great movement of the human race.

But perfect and absolute confidence in the indestructibility of Liberalism is not inconsistent with an admission that the schools, or parties, or organisations, which from time to time carry on the work of Liberalism are by no means indestructible. Nor is any want of loyalty involved in the confession, that the liberal party is now passing through a very critical phase of its existence. Without entering on any recondite historical disquisition, we may say roughly, that the Liberals, as a party, date from the first Reform Bill. They succeeded to the inheritance of the old Whigs, who in their time did good yeoman's service to the State. There are individual Whigs left now, but the Whigs as a party are dead and gone. No young politician starting in public life, no candidate addressing himself to any independent constituency, would think of describing himself as a Whig. The substitution of the term Liberal for Whig, means a good deal more than a mere change of names. With the name of Whig, there has vanished also that peculiar coalition between democratic principles and aristocratic prejudices which constituted the essence of Whiggism. In the same way, whenever it comes to pass that Liberal, as a party name, is supplanted by that of Radical, the alteration will indicate a corresponding change in the character of the party to whom the name is applied. The Liberals, as our generation has known them, have represented the cause of progress, but they have represented also the interests, the convictions, and to some extent the prejudices of the great English middle class. It is not difficult to imagine a party with higher aims, greater earnestness, and deeper convictions, than that which still bears the name of Liberal. We may reasonably hope that in the course of years, England may be governed by such a party as the one which our imagination pictures. But common sense tells us that there is not, and that for a long time there cannot be, any such party in existence; while common fairness bids us acknowledge that with all its failings, the liberal party of the present day forms the nearest approach to a true party of progress that the country has yet known.

What mathematicians term solutions of continuity are rare in our political annals; and even assuming that we thought the result desirable, we should be unwise to reckon on any sudden transformation of the liberal party as it at present exists. We can understand well enough that to a class of minds wedded to abstract principles, impatient of delay, eager for immediate action, the sort of Liberalism which characterises the great mass of our party may seem a matter of small account. We think ourselves that this view is founded on a miscalculation. The question that practical men ought to ask themselves is this, What combination is most likely to promote the furtherance of liberal measures? To this question our reply would be, without hesitation,

the maintenance of the liberal party. Unless some common line of action can be agreed upon which will unite in its support the whole, or, at any rate, the great majority, of the members who now sit on the left-hand of the Speaker, it is obvious that the party will break up into sections. We should have indeed a body of advanced Reformers, men holding very definite opinions, men of great earnestness and deep convictions, and we may add also, men of somewhat narrow prejudices, whose destructive energies were developed out of proportion to their constructive ones. But it is certain that for the present, probably for many years to come, this party must remain in a hopeless minority. Condemned to the inaction of prolonged exclusion from power, their prejudices would become more confirmed, their zeal more intolerant, and the division between them and the moderate Liberals more irreconcilable. The result would be that a great portion of the party would give a tacit, if not an avowed, support to the Tories; and we should have an era of conservative rule of more or less prolonged duration. Now, it is quite conceivable that a state of things might come to pass in which such a disruption of the party, such an open separation between the advanced and the moderate Liberals, would be of real advantage to the cause of progress. If there were no important measures which could be carried by the Liberals of our day, if the one condition on which corporate existence were possible was that the earnest Reformers should consent to do nothing in order not to lose the support of their weaker brethren, we should say that the sooner a liberal majority was exchanged for a radical minority the better for the interests of true Liberalism. But we can see no reason to believe that this is so. On the contrary, we see a great deal of work before us which the liberal party may and can perform, but which assuredly will not be performed if the administration of affairs is handed over permanently to the Conservatives.

Under these circumstances, men who, like ourselves, prefer the substance to the shadow, an immediate certain good to a problematical and contingent gain, must view with extreme reluctance the prospect of any dissolution of the liberal party. There is still, in our judgment, much work for it to do, work that it can do better than any other organisation which can take its place; and till that work be accomplished the time has not come for its disruption. Yet it would be idle to pretend that there existed no danger of its breaking to pieces. On the contrary, we hold the danger which threatens its existence to be a very grave one, and to be averted only by decisive action. We have not the space to inquire now into the various causes which gradually debilitated the great party that carried Roman Catholic emancipation, that passed the Reform Bill, that repealed the Corn Laws. This much, however, we may fairly say, that the Palmerstonian régime represented the lowest period in the Liberal annals. The grand ministerial majority returned to Parliament at the last

election, was composed of men whose chief bond of union consisted in the fact that they all more or less willingly accepted the necessity of supporting Lord Palmerston as Premier. When the great statesman died,—for great as a statesman we hold Lord Palmerston to have been, whatever opinions may be held on his character as a Reformer or a Liberal,—the majority were, not only as sheep without a shepherd, but as sheep without the ovine instinct which causes them to herd in flocks together. It is conceivable that Lord Russell and Mr. Gladstone might have kept the party together if they had pursued the Palmerstonian policy of masterly inaction; but their attempts to carry the principles of the party into practice, in however modified a degree, broke to pieces an organisation which had already lost its true bond of cohesion. The session of 1866 showed clearly that the Liberals, great as their numerical strength was, did not possess a working majority in Parliament for any practical purpose, and that the task of reform, if it was to be done at all, must be done by a Conservative Government.

We are not going to re-open once more the weary controversy as to the history of the late Reform Bill, the intentions of its authors, or the morality of the tactics by which it was passed. We only allude to the subject in order to point out how the circumstances under which household suffrage became the law of the land must necessarily influence the future policy of the Liberals. The bill,—let us speak the honest truth,—was not carried in obedience to any irresistible expression of popular opinion. The “*Vox Populi*” was not obeyed, for the simple reason that it was never raised. The Hyde Park riots and Pall Mall processions were made much of as excuses for reform, but no sensible person regards them as the causes of reform. In fact, the character and progress of the bill would not have been materially affected in any way if the League had never seen the light of day. Nor, again, can we fairly say that reform was due to the deep conviction of Parliament. Roman Catholic emancipation was never popular with the masses; but it was carried against the Crown and the Tories by the resolution of the Liberals of the time. No similar assertion can honestly be made with respect to the late Reform Bill. It was accepted with about equal reluctance by both sides of the House, as a disagreeable necessity; and if vote by ballot had existed in Parliament, and had been surrounded with that inviolable secrecy which the admirers of the system imagine can be attached to its working, we cannot doubt but, time after time, Mr. Disraeli’s household suffrage measure would have been thrown out by overwhelming majorities. We make this confession with no view of denying the need for reform. On the contrary, we hold that it was a matter of urgent national necessity. The dead-lock of parties may have been the immediate cause of the bill passing, but that fatal dead-lock was due to the fact that the electoral body had ceased to represent the nation.

Looking on the whole question with as much impartiality as we can command, it seems to us that, while the Tories cannot justly claim any great credit for passing a measure which they disliked at heart, the Liberals, as a party, can as little demand gratitude for the enactment of a bill to which at best they gave a half-hearted support. In a certain sense, no doubt, everybody who at any time advocated an extensive enlargement of the franchise, contributed to the final triumph of the principle of household suffrage. But no one party in the State can fairly claim the sole, or even the chief, parentage of the measure. We record this fact with regret. It would, in our judgment, have been better for the Liberals, better for the country at large, had reform been enacted through their unassisted efforts. For many years past reform has been the work set before the liberal party; and had they not persistently declined to grapple with their task, their position at the present day would be far more commanding than it is. There is no mistake, however, in politics at once more common and more fatal than that of assuming, because we wish things had been otherwise, that therefore they were otherwise. We shall commit this error, unless we acknowledge, not only to others, but to ourselves, that the Reform Bill of 1867 was in no real sense the work of the liberal party.

We dwell on this fact, from a double motive. During the recess there has been a tendency on the part of liberal spokesmen to fight the old battle over again with unnecessary zeal. It is natural enough that while the Tory leaders arrogate to themselves a credit which is not justly due, their opponents should endeavour to prove that their own claims on the public gratitude are at least equally well founded. But the word natural is not synonymous with the word politic; and we deem this perpetual recurrence to an extinct controversy to be unwise. Even if we do not accept Talleyrand's dictum, that there is one person who knows everything, and that is, all the world, we must own that there is one person who can never be deceived, and that is, all the world. Now, all the world knows that the late Reform Bill was in no sense the outcome of honest hearty work on the part of the Liberals; and therefore no amount of special pleading or historical disquisition will create an impression that it was so. The respective merits or demerits of Tories and Liberals, Radicals, Adullamites, Tea-room men, and others, belong to the domain of history; and no practical good will accrue to any one from an attempt to prove that things would have been different if something had happened which did not happen, or that our public men intended to do something quite different from what they actually did do. The great public cares much more about the coming future than the immediate past, and is more anxious to know what the Liberals intend to do this session than what they think they ought to have done in the one that is now numbered with the dead. Again,—and this is a

point to which we attach much greater importance,—it is essential to understand the true character of our recent reform legislation, if we are to make any just estimate of what should be the future programme of the Liberals. We have seen with regret a disposition in several of the recent manifestoes of the liberal leaders, to preach a new reform crusade. Now, we admit fully that there is much that must be done to make the new measure work in practice. The ratepaying clauses must be done away with; the vicious principle of the representation of minorities must be either expelled from our electoral system, or reduced to limits which guarantee its practical innocuousness; and the question of borough boundaries must be settled in accordance with some intelligible theory. All these, however, are matters of detail, of administrative, rather than political, reform. When all this is done, we admit further that the representation of the country will still fall very far short of being placed on a satisfactory and permanent basis. The great masses of the rural labouring population will still be practically unrepresented; the flagrant electoral anomalies by which the vote of Thetford neutralises that of Manchester, will remain in full force; Parliament will still continue to represent the landed interests of the country in an excessive proportion. Yet, allowing all this, as we do most fully, we believe that wise and sincere Liberals will do well to accept the electoral situation as it is, without seeking for the moment to modify it materially.

Vote by ballot, redistribution of seats, extension of household suffrage to the counties; such we understand to be the programme of some of the advanced Liberals for the coming session. Now, even leaving the ballot out of consideration for the moment, and assuming that this programme was one with which, in other respects, all true Liberals were prepared to coincide in the abstract, we should still dispute the advisability of putting it forward as the platform of the party. After all, in politics, the first question about any reform must be, is it feasible; is there any chance of carrying it? Speculative reforms are questions for the essayist and the journalist, not for the politician,—for the pioneers, not for the rank and file, of the army of progress. Now, is there any reasonable prospect that the reforms in question can be carried through Parliament, either this session or for many sessions to come? Our own opinion is that there is not. It would be different if the Liberals were to approach the task flushed with recent victory, strong in the recollection of fresh triumphs, supported by the force of deep popular enthusiasm. Notoriously, they enter on the contest with none of these advantages. On the contrary, the dead weight of public opinion will be exerted against these “Reformers of the day after the fight.” If household suffrage had been carried in obedience to an irresistible popular demand, the case would have been different. As it is, the concessions made at Mr. Disraeli’s instance, were actually in advance of what public opinion demanded.

We are far from deeming that the undoubted apathy which prevailed throughout the public mind during the course of the reform agitation, is matter for congratulation. We trust that one good result of household suffrage will be to restore the old interest which our working classes took at former periods in political questions. We should be glad to see manifestations of public feeling of a very different character from the Bogus demonstrations of the League. But we cannot disguise the truth that popular feeling would have been satisfied for the time by a measure falling far short of household suffrage. Under these circumstances, any immediate agitation for much more wholesale reforms is not likely to meet with any strong popular support. The verdict of the unknown public, of that great fluctuating body which has no very defined political opinions, which is neither steadily liberal nor persistently conservative, will assuredly be, that it is better to wait awhile. If ever there was a country which, both for good or bad, "liked to see its way," it is this England of ours. By the bill of last session, an immense change has been introduced into our Constitution; the proportions of the different elements out of which the electoral body is composed, have been materially altered; the national instinct, therefore, is in favour of making no other great change in our institutions till we see how this latest one works in practice. There is no superfluous force left from the late reform agitation which demands some immediate vent for its energies. On the contrary, the motive power was exhausted before the work was fully done; and time must elapse before fresh force can be generated. We are by no means clear that it might not be a more statesmanlike, or at least more philosophical proceeding to finish the reform of our representative system completely before we lay the work aside; but under free institutions such as we enjoy, all reforms must be carried on piecemeal; and after the great step we have made, the time has not come for attempting to take another with any chance of success. In agitating, therefore, for a wide redistribution of electoral power, or for a wholesale enfranchisement of the agricultural population, the Liberals will, we believe, be engaged in an unprofitable labour. Sooner or later these reforms must be carried; but the period of their enactment will, as things indicate at present, be later and not sooner.

Moreover, we would observe, in passing, that the connection of two reforms, like redistribution and extension of the County suffrage, about which all Liberals are substantially agreed in principle, with a question like that of the ballot, on which the greatest diversity of opinion exists, appears to us singularly ill-judged and unfortunate. A great deal of nonsense has been talked, both in favour of and against vote by ballot; but the question at issue between the supporters and the opponents of the system is in itself a very simple one. No Liberal denies that intimidation and corruption are evils. Every Liberal admits that in itself open voting is preferable to secret

voting. In order, therefore, to establish a case for the ballot, it has to be shown, in the first place, that the system would prove effective as a means of preventing the voter from being influenced by corrupt considerations; and in the second place, that the advantage so gained would not be purchased by a more than commensurate loss of public honesty and open dealing. We ourselves, in common with a very large section, if not a majority of the liberal party, distrust the efficacy of the ballot as a practical system, and deem that intimidation and bribery may be far more easily suppressed by the enlargement of our constituencies than by any mechanical alteration in the manner in which votes are recorded. We are open to conviction on the point; and it is possible some day or other we may feel it incumbent on us to accept vote by ballot as a necessary evil. For the present, however, we can see no necessity for so doing; and therefore we must decidedly object to making the ballot one of the points of the Liberal charter. It is very doubtful whether we can carry redistribution or County household suffrage singly. It is certain we cannot hope to carry either if we insist on the ballot being an inalienable part of any scheme for further reform.

As we have said, however, we believe the question of immediate electoral reforms had better be left to sleep for a time. The course of events has brought about a great change of a democratic character. How that change has been achieved it is not necessary to inquire; the important fact is, that the change exists. Owing to a variety of causes, the full significance of the change has hardly yet been appreciated. The Tories, naturally enough, have all along been anxious to make out that, under the new régime, things would remain much as they were; while the Liberals were equally desirous to show that the concessions granted to the popular cause were rather nominal than real. And we own it seems to us an open question what may be the immediate party result of the enfranchisement of the small householder class. We shall have to deal in future with large masses of electors who are not influenced by the party cries which divided the old constituencies, who believe only too generally that Whig and Tory are very much alike, after all. But even supposing that the enfranchised classes should return candidates pledged to the support of a Conservative government, we should still have no doubt as to the democratic tendency of the Reform Bill. It has increased the power of numbers; it has thereby decreased the power of the governing classes. Under these conditions the Liberals have a great field open to them, if they only know how to play their cards. Their first object should be to convince the new electors that they, in vulgar parlance, mean business. It was by doing nothing, by shirking the work set before them, by wasting their energies on measures which there was no practical prospect of passing, that the Liberals gradually lost the confidence of the old constituencies. It must be by the con-

verse of this process that they can hope to gain the confidence of the remodelled electoral body. At one time it seemed probable that the Government would endeavour to outbid the Opposition in active legislation. Possibly this might have been the case had Mr. Disraeli been allowed full liberty of action. As it is, the "*vis inertie*" of the Conservative party has prevailed; and it seems tolerably certain that the Tories will not endeavour to grapple seriously with any of the great questions which press so urgently for a solution. Their inaction ought to be the signal for our activity. Let us try and sketch out what programme of things to be done, of work to be compassed, the liberal party may fairly lay before itself.

First and foremost, to our minds, there stands the great question of national education. For Liberals this question has a special and personal importance beyond that which attaches to it intrinsically. Though we may deprecate any immediate and premature attempt to extend the suffrage in the rural constituencies, we cannot doubt that in the course of a few years household suffrage must become the law of the land in town and country alike. Indeed, we are hardly trespassing on the domain of prophecy when we assume that, in another generation or two at the most, we in England shall be under the rule of universal manhood suffrage. The tendency of the age is towards government by numerical majorities; and we have already entered on a course from which there is no retrogression. This being so, the education of the masses becomes a matter of imperial interest. Even the most ardent believer in the practical working of democratic government can hardly look without uneasiness to the prospect of supreme political power being entrusted to a population so ignorant, so illiterate, and so unintelligent, as that which peoples the English agricultural shires, and which forms the lower stratum of the urban working class. As far as can be foreseen, we may look forward to a considerable interval of repose before we are called upon to extend the electoral franchise much further than it has been extended by the recent Reform Bill. The children of the present generation of working men will have grown up to manhood before the next great step has to be taken. Now, the first and chief duty of the liberal party should be to utilise this breathing time. It is perfectly conceivable that within the next two or three years we might establish such a system of national education as would extirpate ignorance from our soil. There is no practical reason why, in twenty years time, a grown-up man under forty unable to read and write should not be as rare a spectacle in England as he is in North America, or Prussia, or Scotland. But this great boon,—the greatest boon, we think, that could be granted to England,—can only be achieved by vigorous and united and persistent exertions on the part of the liberal party. Individual Conservatives may be, and are, alive to the necessity for national education; but the ruling instinct of the Tory nature is opposed to

the enlightenment of the masses. Then, too, by an unfortunate combination of circumstances, the clergy and the leaders of the religious world,—the very people, in fact, who have done most of their own accord to promote education,—attach such value to dogmatic theological tuition, that they are opposed to any wholesale system of State education, which must necessarily be secular in its character. And last, but not least, the whole bias of our English nature is hostile to the State interference and to the administrative organisation which are absolutely requisite essentials of any scheme of general education. It is therefore only too probable that the agitation now set on foot, with the view,—to adopt Mr. Lowe's ill-natured, but not altogether baseless sarcasm,—of teaching our future masters to know their letters, may end in failure from the joint opposition of the classes who either dislike education altogether, or are opposed to secular education on principle, or will hear of nothing but the voluntary system. It lies within the power of the Liberals to defeat this coalition of hostile forces; but the victory can only be won by union. We should exceed the limits of our space and subject here if we attempted to define the exact character of the system of education which the Liberals ought to support. The one main object, we may state, of all such systems should be to give every English child the power of reading and writing fluently. So long as this object is achieved, it seems to us that the details of the process are of comparatively little importance. Let any project be prepared by the liberal leaders which offers a reasonable prospect of effecting this great end, and we should deem it the duty of the party to sink all minor differences, and support it with the same energy as that which carried the repeal of the Corn Laws. What Abraham Lincoln said, towards the close of his life, about the abolition of slavery, the liberal party ought to say to itself about the enactment of a system of national education—"It is their duty to see this matter through." If they cannot unite to do this, if they are unwilling to make the necessary sacrifices, or the requisite exertions, it is a sure sign that, as a party, they have lived out their time, and must give place to other workers. To put down ignorance is the present task which events have entrusted to the Liberals of England. By their fulfilment or non-fulfilment of this mission, their record will be judged hereafter.

Next in importance to the question of education comes that of Ireland. Upon this point, also, it is all-essential that the Liberals should determine on united action. In this article, we would observe, we are not putting forward our own views of what ought to be the policy of the liberal party in the abstract; our object is to indicate, if possible, the work which it lies practically within their power to do. Proceeding on this principle, we say without hesitation that, whether it be desirable or not to deal with the land question in Ireland, or with the relations between the sister kingdom and Great Britain, it is not ad-

visible that any specific legislation on these questions should form part of the liberal programme. It is possible that in the course of time certain clear and definite views on these important issues may be accepted as articles of the liberal creed. At present this is so far from being the case, that any attempt to deal with these questions would simply result in the disruption of the party. Is then nothing to be done for Ireland? Such, most assuredly, is not our opinion. There is one measure which can be, and ought to be, carried without delay; one wrong which can be, and ought to be, redressed at once. We allude, of course, to the Established Church in Ireland. Now this is a matter on which the liberal party should in our judgment take immediate action. It may be urged with some plausibility, that the existence of the Protestant Establishment across St. George's Channel, however gross an abuse and anomaly it may be in theory, has never been brought prominently forward as one of the wrongs of Ireland, and that the disendowment of the Episcopal Church would not do much towards allaying the disaffection of which Fenianism is the outcome. In reply to this objection, we would urge that any measures we take about Ireland must necessarily be tentative. We disbelieve "in toto" in the existence of any political panacea or nostrum which would at once restore loyalty, and prosperity, and contentment, to our Celtic fellow-countrymen. The real ills of which Ireland has to complain arise from causes which have been in operation for many centuries; and years, possibly generations, must elapse, before any possible or impossible legislation can undo the work of ages. In dealing with Ireland, we must proceed step by step; and it is obvious that the first step must be the abolition of a State Church, whose creed is that of the small minority of the nation. Nor are we by any means certain that the result of its abolition will be so slight as is commonly supposed. After all, its existence is the symbol of the supremacy of the Orange minority over the Catholic majority; and symbols are of more practical importance to this world than utilitarian philosophy is disposed to acknowledge. Even the most intelligent and loyal of Irish Roman Catholics have a conviction that they are not as well off as their Protestant fellow-subjects, by reason of their religious belief; and it is most desirable to remove any shadow of ground for the existence of such a conviction. When once the State Church is abolished, the endowments of Trinity College, Dublin, thrown open to all Irishmen irrespective of their religious creed, and every office of State made accessible to Catholics, the last of the legislative grievances of which Ireland can complain will be exhausted.

Now, with respect to the injustice of upholding the Irish Church, all Liberals are agreed. Indeed, the idea of a Church supported out of national grants, and designed to teach a creed which is opposed to that of the vast majority of the nation, is inconsistent with, and antagonistic to, the very principles of Liberalism. No Liberal can

even pretend to defend the maintenance of the Anglican Establishment in Ireland. The utmost he can urge in its behalf is that it does not work in practice as badly as might be supposed in theory. Here, then, is a clear, definite, distinct, simple object, which Liberals of all shades may fairly unite in achieving. No sane person expects that the Conservative party will of its own free-will abolish the Establishment, and thereby alienate from itself the sympathies of the Orange faction. The Conservative party will certainly not do so unless outside pressure be applied. Mr. Disraeli has probably as little sympathy as any member of the House of Commons with the institution in question. But then he is the last man in the world to put his head into a hornets' nest without urgent necessity. On the other hand, the position of the Irish Church is so palpably untenable and indefensible, that if strong pressure be applied, if the odium of taking the initiative be removed from their own shoulders, a Tory administration is not likely to stake its existence on the defence of the Church in Ireland. The responsibility, therefore, of deciding whether this long-standing abuse shall or shall not continue, rests practically with the Liberals themselves. If they do nothing, the Conservatives will let the question stand over. If they put their shoulders to the wheel, the battle is won before the fight commences. As with regard to education, so with regard to the Irish Church, there is work to be done which ought to be done, and which only the Liberals can do. They are placed upon their trial; and it is for them to show that they are in favour of reform in fact as well as in name.

It would be easy to write out a long list of reforms not less intrinsically important than those we have already specified. Our criminal code, our national expenditure, the game laws, the administration of the poor laws, the question of entails, church rates, army and navy reform, municipal government, penal servitude, and a host of similar topics, press for early treatment. On all these points thoughtful Liberals must form opinions of their own. The time is probably not far distant when the party, as a party, must adopt some definite standard in dealing with each of them. But at present we may say that they are hardly ripe for collective action. It is possible that the views put forward by some advanced thinkers, with reference to these subjects, may ultimately commend themselves to the rank and file of the party; but that time is not yet; and we view with distrust any attempt to carry out crude theories, however plausible in themselves. Of politics, even more than of other things, the saying holds good that sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. How far the whole system of government by party is abstractedly defensible is a question which lies entirely beyond our present range. We have to deal with existing facts, not with theories; and for the time, government by party is the only system possible for England. But the very essence of such

a system requires that the members of the organisation should to a great extent subordinate their own views to those of the majority; and therefore we hold that politicians who may entertain very decided opinions as to many of the questions we have alluded to, will act honestly, as well as prudently, in making no attempt to carry their opinions into practice till they have done the work which it lies within their power to do by the help of their colleagues.

As far as we can guess, foreign questions are not likely in future to engross public attention to the same extent as they have done in preceding sessions. In itself this is not to be regretted. It is, to say the least, significant that the years during which the liberal party in England were most inactive, most neglectful of their home mission, were also those in which they interested themselves most entirely in foreign affairs, and identified themselves most closely with the futures of oppressed nationalities. We are very far from wishing to endorse the sneer with which Mr. Disraeli denounced the "jargon of cosmopolitan sympathies." The cause of progress is to a great extent identical, no matter in what portion of the world the perpetual contest between freedom and oppression, between ignorance and enlightenment, between good and evil, may be waged for the time being; and English Liberalism would be very near its end if the time should ever come when the struggles of other nations to obtain popular institutions should excite no sympathy in England. Moreover we may add, that, as a rule, the politicians who have taken the keenest interests in the issues fought out abroad, are also those who have laboured most earnestly to promote the success of liberal principles at home. But still during late years an exaggerated importance was undoubtedly attached to what it was the fashion to call the moral influence of English public opinion. Non-intervention having been adopted, as we believe wisely, as the basis of our foreign policy, we should do well to accept its consequences frankly. France and Italy, Germany, Poland, and Denmark, must practically work out their own destinies; and in the solution of the various problems with which continental nations have to deal, the public opinion of this country, as expressed in Parliament, or by the despatches of our Foreign Office, is only one, and by no means a very important ingredient. That the fate of our governments should have been influenced, as they have been within the last few years, by the opinions their members were supposed to hold concerning foreign questions, on which the nation had no intention whatever of taking positive action, is a striking illustration of the unreality which characterised the politics of the Palmerstonian era. To the large class of Liberals who were enthusiastic about Italy, and indifferent to all considerations of home reforms, we should address the old Scriptural reproof, "This oughtest thou to have done, and not to have left the other undone."

There is, however, one foreign question of a very practical and by no means sentimental character, on which we hold that the Liberals, as a party, should take decided ground. We allude to the relations between America and England. We do not say that a resolution to make compensation for the Alabama, or to alter our naturalisation laws, or to make any other direct and specific concession to the demands of the Government or people of the United States, should form part of the liberal programme. These questions involve a variety of considerations, many of which, under our system of government, must necessarily be left to the decision of the Administration. The period may arrive, probably at no very distant date, when the issues which divide the two great branches of the Anglo-Saxon community may be brought to a point at which the country may be called on to decide what course duty, and honour, and interest alike call upon us to adopt. That time has not come; and, pending its arrival, the liberal party cannot pledge itself to any specific course of action with reference to an undefined issue. But the Liberals can, and ought in our opinion, to proclaim that peace and amity with America, at all cost save that of the national honour or independence, is a fundamental tenet of their political creed. The differences which threaten the continuance of friendly relations between ourselves and America arise from considerations of feeling, far more than from any direct collision of interests. Now nothing could tend so much to a removal of the ill-feeling which, rightly or wrongly, has ensued from our conduct during the late war as a conviction among Americans that the great liberal party of this country were sincerely and honestly desirous to secure the friendship of the American nation.

To leave aside all higher motives, the instinct of self-preservation ought to teach our English Liberals, that between them and America there exists a solidarity of interests. Without wishing to revive an embittered controversy, we may say, as a matter of fact, that the disruption of the liberal organisation was due in no small degree to the extent to which a large section of the party was false to its principles during the struggle between the Slave Power and the Free States; and no acute penetration is needed to see that, if events should unhappily bring about a collision between England and America, the one certain result of the struggle will be to give a new lease of power to the Tories, and to break up the liberal party. Whether we like the admission or not, it is our cause which is at stake across the Atlantic. The name of democracy may be distasteful to our ears, but the principles of free labour, of equality before the law, of self-government, of popular education, of civil and religious freedom,—the principles for which our predecessors have contended, and for which we contend still,—are all bound up in the success or failure of popular institutions in the great community which we have founded beyond the seas. The famous "*Tua res agitur*" may be

said of the interests which connect the Liberals of England with the cause of freedom in America.

Thus our programme for the Liberals has, at least, the merit of simplicity. We doubt whether much work can be done during the present session. A moribund Parliament which has already outlived the causes that called it into being is not likely to initiate any great enterprise. Moreover, the next few months must inevitably be taken up with what may be termed the revision of the appendixes to the Reform Bill, including the arrangements which are necessary for the Scotch and Irish constituencies. As we have said, we think the Liberals will commit a blunder if they enter at once on a crusade for a further extension of the franchise, but they will have enough to do in seeing that the measure is finished and perfected in conformity with the great principles on which it is based ; that no attempt be made to diminish the democratic character of the measure by artificial restrictions ; that the new Parliament which must assemble next year shall truly represent the electoral body, to whom its composition is now supposed to be entrusted.

But though the actual legislation of Parliament must probably be confined to closing up old accounts, we hold that no time should be lost before the Liberals take ground for the approaching elections. Their programme, as we opine, should consist of three articles ; Establishment of a national system of education ; Abolition of the Established Church in Ireland ; and the maintenance of friendly relations with the United States. Of course it would be very easy to fill up this programme with all kind of reforms to be achieved, if ever the Liberals get back into power. We have had, however, too much of these prospectuses, which promise more than can possibly be performed. At the commencement of the Opera season, it is the custom of rival managers to issue programmes reciting long lists of operas, all of which are to be brought out during the spring months. Anybody who has the slightest acquaintance with operatic matters must be aware that if the season were prolonged to twice its usual length, there would still not be time to redeem all the pledges of the managerial prospectus. Yet the practice continues, because it is supposed the public are somehow tickled with the mere recital of the names of operas. A similar delusion appears to be often entertained by the framers of Royal Speeches and political manifestoes. But we think for once the practice might be departed from with advantage. To carry through a scheme of national education, and to establish religious equality in Ireland, will take all the energies of the liberal party ; and we shall have more faith in their fulfilment of their programme, if they reduce it within limits which render its execution at least theoretically possible. And just because we wish that the programme of the party should be one capable of realisation, we wish also that it should be put forward in such a manner

as to leave no doubt of the sincerity of its authors. At the risk of repeating ourselves, we wish to impress upon the leaders of the party, that their first and foremost duty must be to show the world that they really mean work. We have scarcely alluded in our remarks to the probability that before long the Liberals may be once more in possession of office. We have not dwelt on this fact, because we hold that the formation and enunciation of a definite and distinct programme are necessary preliminaries to the return of the party to power. Any event which should replace them in office before they had settled on their policy, would be in our opinion a positive misfortune.

If politics were a mere game, there would be something to be said for a waiting policy. It may be a defect in tactics to show your hand before it is absolutely necessary to do so. But politics are in our judgment something more than a contention as to which set of men shall sit upon the Treasury benches. We hope to see the Liberals re-installed in office ; but we hope so because we believe that they can thus better carry out the work set before them ; and we are convinced that work can never be accomplished unless they can command the support of the public. In order to secure this support they must convince the constituencies that they are in earnest, that they aspire to power, not for the emoluments or dignity of office, but because they are anxious to do honest work honestly. Nothing has been more fatal to the liberal party than the conviction, which of late years has taken great hold of the popular mind, that Liberals and Tories act in the same way whenever they are once in power. It is possible that the enunciation of a clear and distinct programme, such as that which we have indicated, may detach from the Liberals a certain amount of half-hearted support, given to them on the tacit understanding that they are not to carry out their principles into execution. But we are convinced that any loss of this kind will be more than counter-balanced by the sympathy which a policy of action will call forth throughout the country. If we are to have a dynasty of "rois fainéants," the public will certainly look for its sovereigns amidst the Conservatives, not amidst the Liberals ; amidst the party whose creed consists in an aversion to change, not amidst those whose motto is and must be, Forwards.

ABOUT HUNTING.

II.

IN the observations which we made three or four months since about hunting, we did not get beyond a simple explanation of the nationality of the sport and a statement of the cost of following it. We now propose to describe, if it may be within our power to do so, what it is that the hunting man enjoys, and how that enjoyment may be best secured. And we will endeavour to give to the tyro in hunting a few ideas as to what he should do, how he should conduct himself, and in what way he should endeavour to make himself happy in the hunting-field. We will add to this some few observations as to the difficulties which are ordinarily encountered in the management of a country, as we are taught by experience to think that those difficulties are very much underrated by many gentlemen who, when they are at a meet, think it to be all in the course of nature that a country well provided with foxes and fit to be ridden over should be open to them and to their horses.

That there is much to be enjoyed in hunting can hardly be doubted by any of our readers. Who knows the man or woman who has hunted and who does not wish to continue it?—or any young man who does not hunt, and does not wish that he did? And yet it would be difficult enough, even for the sportsman who has been at it for half a century, who has thought of it, dreamed of it, and talked of it, who has longed for it in summer, and steadily practised in it in winter,—it would be difficult enough even for such a one to realise to himself what it is that he enjoys. In most of the amusements to which men are prone, there is a certain standard of success by which superiority in achievement can be measured;—in so many head of game brought down by him who shoots; in so many fish, or so many pounds of fish, captured by the man who fishes; in the score at billiards or at cricket; in the points won at whist; and above all, in the events on the turf. In each of these a man can reckon up his doings, can count his triumphs, and can tell himself, by the result of his calculations, whether to him the game is worth the candle. There can be no such reckoning up in hunting. The old-fashioned taking of the brush, which was once regarded as the winning of the Derby of the day, is altogether exploded. The huntsman takes the brush, and when a gentleman brings it home in his pocket, it is because he has, with the Master's permission, obtained it, not without a consideration, from that popular functionary.

It will be known of any man who is seen frequently with the same pack, whether he rides well or ill to hounds,—and no doubt the public voice will give a pre-eminence to this man or to that of which the hero will be fully aware. But there is no scoring of runs in hunting, no counting up of achievements;—and it is not the foremost rider who is the best sportsman, except on those rare occasions on which to ride foremost requires endurance of man and beast, as well as skill, patience, courage, and good fortune. It unfortunately happens that he who rides foremost in most runs is generally where he ought not to be. It is hardly too much to say that the Master of hounds is usually anathematising in spirit the foremost rider, and that he not unfrequently feels himself called upon to translate his spirit into words. In fact, the customary foremost rider, the man who flashes on the moment the hounds re-settle to their scent, is a pest. Though there be triumphs in hunting, those triumphs can hardly be weighed and measured, and should ever be treasured deep in the silent bosom,—without a word, without a sign, on the part of him who has earned them, to show that he knows that they are his. The successful cricketer may boast of his score. The fisherman may say how many pounds he has caught. But the hunting man should never talk of his own prowess. He may ride as jealous as he pleases; but his speech of himself should be yea, yea, and nay, nay. It is not in recounted triumphs that the pleasure of hunting consists.

But before we attempt to say what this pleasure is, we will venture to express an opinion as to what it is not. And this we will do, because we think that there is still abroad among some folk,—mothers whose sons may perhaps come to hunt, and fathers who have marriageable daughters,—an erroneous idea that hunting is fast, in the slang sense of the word, and that it co-exists naturally with drinking, swearing, gambling, bad society, naughty women, and roaring lions. Among this class of persons, it would naturally be supposed that the man who hunted on Saturday and Monday would certainly not be seen in church on the Sunday. This, we venture to assert, is a mistake in the minds of those who, from the circumstances of their life, know nothing of the hunting-field; and it has been in a great measure produced by the false and flashy descriptions given of hunting by those who have taken upon themselves to portray our country sports. We took up the other day a volume of a modern sporting magazine, and found, bound up with it as a frontispiece, a picture of sundry men in top-boots, sitting or lying round a dinner-table,—and all of them apparently drunk. This picture of a drunken revel was intended to be characteristic of a hunting man's delights. The books, too, that we have had about hunting have too frequently described to us a set of loud ignorant men, who are always holloaing "Yoicks," and who are generally exercising the keenest of their intellects in cheating each other out of a ten-pound note in some

matter of horseflesh. We remonstrate most loudly against this representation of the hunting-field, and declare that we know no place of common resort for amusement, in which a father may go in company with his son, with a fuller assurance that there will be nothing which he and his son may not see and hear and do together. There is a strong feeling against a clergyman who hunts, which we think is grounded on the same mistaken idea. That neither a clergyman should hunt, nor any other man who cannot do so without appropriating time or money which should be given to other things, is clear enough. But, putting that aside, we cannot see how any amusement can be more congenial to, or better adapted for, a gentleman, the nature of whose occupation requires that he shall live in a rural district. There are those who think that a clergyman should never amuse himself in any way, and they are of course only consistent in debarring a vicar from hunting. They would debar him also from reading a novel, or from playing croquet. Our experience, having taught us to believe that clergymen require distraction as much as other men, has induced us also to think that no recreation can be better suited to them than that of the hunting-field. The difficulty consists in this,—that till the prejudice has been conquered, the prejudice itself does the injury which the hunting will not do. The same remarks, *mutatis mutandis*, apply to the hunting of ladies. The company both of the clergyman and of the lady improves the hunting-field, and we cannot perceive that either ladies or clergymen are injured by what they find there. Our present object, however, is to protest that the roaring-lion element of the hunting-field does not ordinarily belong to it. It did so once, no doubt. But the roaring-lion elements of society were more common then than they are now in many phases of life. They who commence hunting in anticipation of the joys to be found in the roaring-lion elements will find that they are mistaken.

The young man who proposes to himself to take to hunting as one of the amusements of his life, should be on his guard not to expect too much from it. He will get air and exercise, and a daily modicum of excitement. He will find society, and will generally be able to choose for himself good society, if he prefer it. He will see the country in many of its most charming aspects, and will gradually, but unconsciously, discover the secrets and the manners of rural life in England. He will learn how farmers look, and what they do, and will become acquainted with the speech, and gait, and customs of the men. For, as it should always be remembered, the best half of hunting is in the social intercourse which it gives. Though the young sportsman be a liver in cities, he will find that he is a liver also in the country,—that that great page of life is opened to him, and that he will come to a knowledge of rural things and men, which he could learn in no other fashion. But he will not ordinarily be riding at the rate of twenty miles an hour,—nor yet at the rate of ten. He will

not be doing those wonderful things which men are made to do in hunting-plates. He will find himself neither encountering certain death by being chucked over his horse's head down a precipice half as high as the monument; nor will he make himself immortal by jumping rivers nearly as broad as Oxford Street. Let the tyro at once understand that the modicum of excitement is considerably less than that which the sporting pictures may have led him to expect.

And here perhaps it may be well to say a word or two about the dangers of hunting. That men do get falls is certain. Occasionally,—though very rarely, as will be apparent to any one making a calculation as to the percentage of such accidents on the number of men who hunt,—but occasionally a man breaks a collar-bone, or a rib or two, or even an arm or a leg. Now and again we hear of some fatal accident from which a man has died. We doubt whether there is any active amusement to which English men and women are attached, of which the same thing may not be said;—unless, perhaps, it be croquet,—as to which we have never yet seen a statement of the percentage of broken ankles; but the accidents of the hunting-field, as they occur among a multitude, and with results which are manifest and immediate, become at once known, whereas others of a different nature pass without our notice. If a comparative statement could be furnished, showing the number of girls who perish in a year from the ill effects of over-exercise in a ball-room, and also of the men who are killed in the hunting-field, we do not doubt on which side would be the greater mortality. Every summer men and boys are drowned when bathing. Every winter that brings us ice brings us also similar accidents from skating. Men suffer fatally from rowing,—as Mr. Skey has been at such pains to tell us. They blow themselves to pieces when shooting. They perish among the Alps. They are wrecked when yachting. They shoot one another at rifle practice. They become apoplectic over a whist table. And why not? It seems to us that at present there is a spirit abroad which is desirous of maintaining the manly excitement of enterprise in which some peril is to be encountered, but which demands at the same time that this should be done without any risk of injurious consequences. Let us have the excitement and pleasure of danger, but, for God's sake, no danger itself! This, at any rate, is unreasonable. A man's life is dear to himself, and dearer to his friends; but it is not so dear but that it may be advantageously risked for the sake of certain results. The amount of the risk must of course be made matter of inquiry by those who are too thoughtful to follow this or that pursuit because others follow it. We believe that in England, Ireland, and Scotland we possess above two hundred established packs of hounds;—that each pack hunts on an average three days a week, and continues to do so through twenty-five weeks of the year; and that an average of eighty horsemen are out with each pack on each occasion. We think that

this will show that one million two hundred thousand is the number of times that a man and horse in the course of the year go out together on this perilous adventure. If we say that a bone is broken annually in each hunt, and a man killed once in two years in all the hunts together, we think that we exceed the average. Our friends from this may find the amount of the risk they will run. For ourselves, we must confess that the incidents of a sedentary life strike us as being more dangerous.

We have ventured to tell our young friend not to expect too much. The runs of which he has read, and which took the gallant men who rode them twenty miles from point to point in something a little under two hours, will not come in his way. Eight miles an hour is a good average hunting pace. In a prolonged run, four miles in twenty minutes, without a check, is a fast burst, and will require a good man and a good horse to keep with hounds in a country that is fenced. A run continued through two hours with no more of a check than may come from casting right and left and then on, will tire any horse that is fairly weighted, if as much as sixteen miles of ground, or if, as is much more likely, fourteen or a dozen miles, have been covered from point to point. But no hunting man should count his pleasure by distance. Time and pace should be his standard. The time he can measure for himself. Pace he cannot measure accurately without measuring distance also;—but he will soon learn to know whether his horse is or is not required to move quickly. The cream of fox-hunting certainly consists in a quick run from a small covert. It should be straight, over a grass country strongly fenced, with a scent that shall enable the hounds to work on without assistance from the huntsman, in which the fox shall seek protection in no large wood, and which shall be brought to a finish by “a kill” in the open before the horses are tired, and with no necessity for cold-hunting at the close. From forty-five minutes to an hour is quite as much as is needed in time for the best run that can be ridden; and the forty-five minutes is generally much better than the hour.

We will now endeavour to explain the points of merit which we have named. The small covert is best,—as regards the individual run,—because the fox must break from it without being half-beaten by the hounds before he consents to leave its protection. And it is best again because the man who really means to ride will rarely fail of being able to get away from it with the hounds. From a large wood no horseman can be sure of a good start unless he rides through and through with the hounds as they hunt their fox within it. When he has done this it will not only be the fox that is half-beaten before the game begins. And the run should be straight. We fear we must acknowledge that this love for a straight line, which is the passion implanted more strongly than any other in the bosom of the

hard-riding fox-hunter, does not find its spring in neighbourly love or in general philanthropy. Looking on the sport as an outsider, one might be inclined to say that a fox running in a circle would be of all foxes the most convenient. The riders would then generally be brought nearer to their homes, the difficulties would be lessened by the curves, and they who did not begin with a good prospect would find things mending with them at every turn. But then, O my friend, things would mend not only with you, but with others also. And it may be that with you things will require no mending. You are away, at the side of the pack, with all done for you that Fortune and a quick look-out could do. Let the hounds go as straight as they will, they cannot rob you of your place. But a check, a curve to the right or to the left, any recreant touch of fear in the quarry's bosom tempting him to seek his old haunts, will in two brace of minutes bring down upon you the ruck of your dear friends which you have already had the extreme pleasure of leaving behind your back. To shake your friends off and get away from them, will soon come to be your keenest delight in hunting. To be there, in the proper place alongside of the hounds, is very sweet; but to know that others are not there is sweeter. To find that the beloved one of your heart has gradually fallen away from you and dropped behind, impeded probably by the depth of the ploughed land, or in difficulties with a distorted ditch, or still measuring with his eye some brook which you have cleared, perhaps because you could not hold your own horse;—this is delightful. To feel this is to feel the true joy of riding to hounds. But all this is lost if that recreant vermin should lose his heart and resolve to return to his own country. If any hard riding man were to tell us that he disregarded the straight running of a fox, we should think him the most philanthropical of men,—if we believed him.

And the run should be over a grass country, strongly fenced. As to the advantages of grass it will be unnecessary to say much. For all hunting purposes it is naturally better than ploughed land. Scent will lie on grass easily, when the upturned soil cannot hold it for a moment. And horses can live on grass and go gaily, who would die away from fatigue if called on to gallop over a ploughed field. Why the strong fences should also be desirable, it may be more difficult to explain. Every hunting man who knows what he is about, will avoid a jump whenever he can. A man who goes over a gate which can be opened does not know what he is about. But yet hunting without leaping would be very dull work;—and although each fence as it comes in the way is recognised as an enemy, as a thing which for the moment is detestable, yet, when it has been passed successfully, it becomes “a thing of beauty and a joy for ever.” And then again, that leaving behind of your friends, which soon becomes the strong passion of the hunting man's heart, is much assisted by strong

impediments,—provided always that the impediments be not too strong for yourself also.

We have asked, too, for a strong scent,—a scent so strong that the huntsman should not be called upon to help his hounds. Our reader will understand that we are now speaking of the delights of riding to hounds rather than of those of seeing hounds hunt. It is our opinion that in a fast run, such as that of which we are speaking, few men observe the hunting of the hounds, let the hounds be ever so near to them. The rider is conscious of the contiguity which is so desirable in his eyes, and finds that he has enough to do to keep his place. And the hounds stream on, as though they were running to a view. There is no effort at hunting on their part, and the real work of maintaining the exact track of the fox is probably done by two or three of the leading dogs. A colder scent and slower work will no doubt display more of the hunting capacity of the pack;—and to an experienced sportsman the ingenuity of a huntsman's casting as he helps his pack will be an additional pleasure. In Squire Western's time this probably was the great delight of hunting. But now the sporting world has reached something, if not better in hunting, at any rate very different; and we have ventured to write these remarks with the understanding that of all virtues on the hunting-field the virtue of pace is to be first considered, and to be regarded as the most desirable.

We have asked that there shall come no large wood in the way of our beloved victim. A fox that has already shown us his mettle by running straight and freely, will often pass through even a large covert without hanging in it. Even if he tries an earth and finds it stopped, he goes on again for some still distant bourne with which he is acquainted. But nevertheless, the wood is a great impediment to the rider, and creates doubts in his mind which for the moment turn all his pleasure to a pain. He has many things to resolve in his mind. Which way does the wind blow?—for the fox will probably turn from the covert down the wind. And shall he ride the wood?—or shall he leave it to his right?—or shall he leave it to his left? He should know its size, its shape, and all its bearings before he can answer these questions with any certainty of judgment. Once more he must call on Fortune to assist him; and if the jade be false to him he may find even now, when he has done so much, that he has done nothing.

And then we have demanded “a kill” in the open, before the horses are tired, and with no necessity for cold-hunting at the close. The reader must understand that to kill his fox is the grand object of the Master; it is the grand object also of the huntsman, of his assistants, and of the hounds. Unless this be done with fair average frequency, the hounds will become useless, the farmers discontented, the old women furious, and hunting would, in fact, be impracticable.

The hunted fox should, if possible, be killed. No scarcity of game should stand in the way of this law, and there should be no protection other than that conferred on all females who, when condemned to death, can show that their position is one of peculiar interest. The vixen heavy with cub should be spared,—and none others. But the “kill in the open,” for those who have lived and kept their place through the heat and turmoil of the chase, is a worthy reward of all their efforts. They see it, and none others do see it. They are saved from that poignant sense of deep injustice which fills the mind of the riding man with indignation when the tail of the hunt comes up to some covert in which the poor animal is being slowly pressed to his death, and every man there is equal with his fellow! He who has been in the lanes for the last half-hour is to be seen bustling round the covert, full of animation, as if he knew all about it! And he will come and discourse with you on the run, treating you perhaps as an equal, or, by the mass, perhaps as his inferior! He will tell you of what he has seen, give you his remarks on the “goodness of the thing,” and nearly choke you with your own suppressed wrath;—for you will not choose to remind him that the run was really over six minutes before he came upon the scene. A “kill in the open” generally saves the successful men of the day from this misery. We have known a man,—nay, we do know a man,—great enough to be able to swear that he was there,—one out of five or six of whom each one knows all the others well,—while at the moment he was two miles off, trotting along with the old gentlemen and the young ladies; who will do so from day to day, till he really produces a semblance of belief in the minds of the uninitiated! But such a hero as that is not to be found in every hunt.

Such is the cream of hunting; but he who desires to know what pleasure hunting will really give him, should not expect delights such as these very frequently. There may be three or four such runs in a season; the man who hunts twice a week may have the chance of seeing two of them; and he will be a lucky man if, out of those two, he can live through one to the end. It is a joy that he will remember through all his days,—to which his memory will cling with a constancy which it will evince for but few other events of his life. But it is not to be thought, because such runs as these are few and far between, that therefore hunting in general is vapid and unsatisfactory. Men will grumble and growl; and they who come out oftenest will grumble and growl the most. We ventured in our former remarks to say of such men that they have an aptitude for getting out of bed on the wrong side. But there they are in spite of their grumbling,—and it is to be presumed that they would not come unless they were pleased. It is very joyous to gallop about a wood;—more joyous when the gallop is out of the wood. As we have said before, the society is much. And though that jealousy of riding of which we have spoken, and

which, whether it be bad or good, is ineradicable from the hunting-field,—though that feeling does exist and have strong sway, one does not always wish to be cutting down one's neighbour, and leaving one's friend in a ditch. There is, moreover, the real working of the hounds to be observed, which, as we have attempted to explain above, the sportsman can hardly watch, can hardly indeed see, when a whole pack is streaming along, in one continuous line, racing with each other as he is racing with that man on the other side of him.

That there are some miseries in hunting is true enough. A blank day,—that is, a day without any fox at all,—is an unpleasant incident. It does not often happen in a well-managed country, but such things are known. One is apt to think, when so great a catastrophe has occurred, with something of regret of the five pound which is being expended so ignominiously, and of all that might have been done with it. There is a shame attached to the utter failure as one drags oneself miserably from covert to covert in the gloom of the coming evening, which is distressing enough. And men become sombre, silent, and cross. They snarl and snap, and don't offer each other cigars. And the Master himself becomes a picture of misery that would melt a heart of stone. We know no more degrading position than that of a Master of hounds when he is driven to own that the day is blank. We believe that there have been Masters who, in thinly populated countries, have gone about provided with an animal in a bag, so that at last this absolute ignominy may seem to be avoided. And we have known of certain drains and holes, not many miles from the kennel, from which foxes would be bolted at three o'clock with a precision which certainly looked like foreknowledge. But in truth a blank is so terrible a misfortune that almost anything done to avoid it may be pardoned. We, ourselves, have often thought that a good drag home in the evening would on such occasions be very exhilarating to the spirits. And the weather is a frequent source of trouble. A hard lasting frost may be endured with equanimity. It is one of those misfortunes to which humanity is subject, but which, though very onerous, are of such certain occurrence, that humanity learns to endure them with patience. And then there is no tormenting doubt with a hard frost. The hunting man runs up to town, or puts his things in order about his house and farm, and consoles himself with thinking that his horses wanted rest. But those mornings which we may best describe as being on the balance, touch-and-go mornings, in which the sportsman does not know whether he will be wiser to go to the meet, or wiser to stay at home, are very bad. If he be energetic he goes, and meets five other energetic men, equally wretched with himself, and a servant from the Master, who tells him that the ground about the kennel is so hard that three men with a pickaxe can't touch it. If he be slack in his tendencies he lays in bed, and hears, the next time he is out, that at one o'clock the hounds

went beautifully, and that they had on that day "the run of the season." And there are other sorrows of a heavy kind coming from the weather. A high wind is very injurious to hunting, and makes riding to hounds almost impossible. A storm at night will cause the foxes to be stopped in their holes,—for a fox is much opposed to going abroad in bad weather. And bright sunshine is bad for scent. And hard rain is very uncomfortable. And muggy warm weather is not serviceable. The old song which proclaims the glories of a southerly wind and a cloudy sky was composed by some one who knew but little of hunting. It must be confessed that in hunting the weather is apt to be troublesome.

And there is the misery, fast increasing in these days, which comes from the too great number of men who hunt. With a field exceedingly numerous it is difficult to get a fox to break. It is the nature of the animal to be more afraid of men than he is even of hounds, and he will prefer to return to the covert, which is full of his canine enemies, to threading his way among horsemen. It becomes, therefore, incumbent on the field to leave as much space as possible clear round the covert, so that the fox may have room to start. The men should cluster together in one spot, and with a small number such clustering is to be managed. But when there are out from 200 to 300 horsemen it is almost impossible to save a covert from being surrounded. Then there is apt to be an unhappy spirit abroad, and ill-natured things are spoken. The Master threatens to take the hounds home, energetic young men ride about beseeching and praying;—and at last the fox is ignominiously hunted to death within his own domain.

There are miseries in hunting we admit,—attributable no doubt originally to Adam's fall and the imperfect nature of men.

We have undertaken to give some hints to the tyro in hunting, and in doing so we trust that our experienced readers will understand that we are not venturing to offer counsel to them. There is no matter in which men are more prone to think that their experience is better than that of others than they are in the matter of hunting. But the young man who only intends to hunt, will forgive us if we offer to him a few hints as the result of a long apprenticeship. Perhaps the first question to be touched is that of the distance to be overcome in getting to the meet. And here of course considerations of expense will present themselves. We do not ourselves love the rail either for our horses or for our own persons; but when the distance is very long it must be used. The objection in our mind is not in the morning,—but in the evening. It is a great nuisance to have to catch a train;—and almost a greater nuisance to wait for one. We do not think that horses in general suffer from such travelling, if they be properly clothed. Horse-sheets should always be brought as a matter of strictest necessity. It will occasionally

become expedient to send horses back by train when the need to do so has not been expected and no provision has been made. In such an emergency clothing should be bought, begged, or borrowed. There is another mode of obtaining it, open to some objection; but there are those who think even that preferable to sending a horse naked into a horse-box after a day's work. For shorter distances young men ride to meet, and older men go on wheels. We are now among the older men; but we used to delight in a fast hack,—thinking the sharp morning trot to be one of the delights of the day. Our rule in life has been to send horses on over night when the distance to the meet exceeds fifteen miles, and to let them go on the same morning for any lesser amount of travelling. Horses should travel to meet at about five miles an hour; and a hunting man can generally take his own horse as well as a groom can do so, if he have patience for the slow pace. He must also have the greater patience necessary for bringing him home;—but, in truth, the bringing of your horse home must usually be your own work. You may keep your hack out every day you hunt, and yet miss to use him two times out of three. If your distance home be usually very great it will be comparatively easy for you to find your supplementary conveyance;—as experience and a map will prove. In returning home it should be remembered that the horse loses as well as gains by a very slow pace. It is a great object to you that he should be in his stable and get his food as early as possible. You have probably brought your sandwiches and sherry with you. He has not. And yet, from his nature, he requires more frequent feeding than you do. Always get gruel for your horse on the first opportunity after the hunting is done. And if your horse have to stand in a stable waiting for a train, throw him a handful of corn,—a handful, and then another. He will eat that, when he will not touch a full feed.

Always go to the meet;—to the meet and not to the covert, to be first drawn. It may be known to you that you may save a mile or two, and perhaps half an hour in the morning, by sloping away to some wood-side. But the meet is announced for the convenience of the hunt in general, and you cannot go to the covert without doing an injury. Such tricks cause men to be hated,—justly; and you should remember that a Master has it always in his power to set your knowledge at defiance. He may change his mind as to the priority of that covert,—and will be very apt to do so if he finds that men act selfishly towards him.

There is great doubt in the minds of hunting men as to what is best to be done when an ordinary covert is being drawn. When the hounds are put into a small gorse of seven or eight acres, or into twenty acres of wood, there need be no doubt;—you should stand where others stand, and if you keep your eyes open and your ears, there is little doubt but that you will get away quite as near to the

hounds as is desirable. The difficulty applies to large coverts,—to woods, as to which it is open to you either to ride to the hounds as they are looking for their game and hunting it when found, or otherwise to remain stationary, saving your horse till you have learned that the fox is away. If you be a heavy man, with one horse, the waiting will certainly be your wisest decision. The question, however, will probably be decided by your temperament. It is not every man who can wait. And there is infinite difficulty as to the spot at which you should station yourself. There is a theory that foxes break down wind,—so as to run the way the wind is blowing. They thus decrease the power of the hound to catch the rising scent; and their instinct probably tells them that this is so. But the theory, we think, is not to be trusted. We have found that foxes break with equal good-will either up or down wind. After awhile, the instinct of which we have spoken is brought to bear, and the fox running up wind will turn and run down wind. He will find that his pursuers have an advantage from the wind, and will change his point. At one period of the year,—in the first weeks of February,—a dog-fox, found away from his own ground, will run home, let the wind blow which way it will. If, at last, you elect to be stationary, you can only stand where others stand who know what they are about better than you do. Move as they move, and learn to hunt with your ears. It is a great thing to know which way hounds are moving in covert from the notes of the huntsman's horn and the tones of his voice,—a great thing to know which way hounds are running from the tones of their voices. But this has to come of experience. For awhile the novice must go as others lead him, and must put his trust in others who have that knowledge which he lacks. Let him be careful not to trust in those who lack it themselves. There are men who have been hunting all their lives, and yet cannot get out of a field without some one to show them the way.

It is quite true that very much depends on getting away well with hounds,—that, indeed, as regards the best runs which are seen, all depends upon it. It occurs not unfrequently,—more often perhaps than not,—that hounds will check and throw up their noses and be at fault within the first half-mile out of covert, and that time will thus be given to those who have been unfortunate at first. But this arises from indifferent scent, and it will follow as a natural though not inevitable consequence, that the pace will be moderate throughout, and that no violence of performance will be needed on the part of the horsemen. The sport may be very good, but you, my tyro, whom I am specially addressing, will have no opportunity of distinguishing yourself. But we will suppose a morning on which the scent lies, the fox breaks gallantly and strongly, and the hounds come out after him with a burst, giving him almost no start of them at all. A fox hardly wants a start, for he can always beat the hounds for awhile.

A fresh fox will get away from a pack of hounds though he be in the very midst of them. On such an occasion as this it is everything to get well away; and that can only be secured by great watchfulness of eye and ear, and by constant attention to the thing that you are doing. It will seem to you to be the merest chance in the world; and yet, if you will observe a set of men hunting together for a season, you will find some six or seven who almost invariably are successful in getting away. These are the men who really think of the business in hand, and who in truth like to ride to hounds.

On this occasion you shall be among those who are fortunate. You shall have seen the fox break. Remember always that in this interesting moment it is your first duty to restrain yourself. Hold your tongue—and your horse. Some halloaing will be necessary, but there will be those there who know when and how to halloo. A cheer uttered too soon will bring the quarry back again. You will esteem us vain and futile if we tell you, now, in cold blood, not to ride on hard before the hounds; but when the time comes you will find yourself so tempted to do so that there are ten chances to one that you will be a sinner. You will forget the hounds in your excitement; and there will be veteran sinners,—cunning men, anxious to steal a march, who will lead you astray. You will sin certainly; but, when you have sinned, repent, and try to sin no more. But in the second field, having received some slightly sarcastic word of rebuke from the huntsman which you will take in good part, you will find yourself in your proper place behind the hounds,—and it will be well that you should be half a field on one side of them. Strive that they shall never be out of one field before you are into it. Do that, and you will be near enough. Fail to do so, and you cannot see them hunt. No man can do this always. The irregularity of the land, the difficulty of fences, and the uncertain running of the fox prevent it; but it should be your object in your riding to go as near to this as may be possible. In the doing it or the not doing it lies all the difference between riding to hounds and riding to men. Riding to men is a very pretty amusement, and many who hunt all their lives never get beyond it. You will soon perceive that not one man in ten of those who are out ever see the work of the hounds when they are running fast. But you will perceive also from the conversation of men that it is considered desirable to see the hounds hunt. My heroic friend of whom I have spoken will know every corner of a field in which the hounds “threw up,”—or, at least, he will know that there are but few able to contradict his assertion.

But you will soon find,—you, a neophyte,—that in the bustle and the hurry of the run, you have no time or mind left for anything but to sit on your horse, look after your fences, and take what care you can that that special man with a red coat and black boots and little bay horse does not get more ahead of you than you can help. You will

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soon find arising in your heart a most unchristian hatred for that man;—and yet he will be of the greatest service to you. You will follow him over one fence after another; and should he fall, or the little bay horse be beaten in a heavy plough, or should he cease to be before your eyes from any cause that you will not understand, you will perceive that you have lost your guide. But you will still go on. You will have forgotten in your excitement all the lessons taught to you, as to seeing your way over the second fence from each field in which you are riding, as to watching the foremost hounds, as to going slow at timber and fast at water, as to a judicious trot on the plough, and the rest of it. For pace you will trust to your spurs; for management of the fences you will trust to your horse; for the course to be taken you will still follow some other guide whom you will unconsciously have chosen. And you will find yourself wishing that the gallant fox was not quite so gallant, and that he would succumb to the ardour of the hounds. It is not till the run is done and over that you will know how sweet and how glorious it was.

We are told that the great happiness of life is to have lived well and to have done with it. There is in the idea of this theory the necessity of a standing ground outside the world which looms to us cold and uncertain. But there is no doubt about the joy of having ridden well to hounds. To have done the thing well and then to say never a word about it, requires a certain conjunction of physical and mental attributes which almost ennoble a man. In speaking of the run which you have ridden well, the first personal pronoun should never be brought into use. No temptation should elicit from you an assertion that you have been nearer to hounds than others. Jealousy in riding is unavoidable. We will not even say that it is not commendable. But a triumphant rider is an odious man. And there is this also to be said of such a one;—that he who sins in boasting, will be presumed also to sin in lying.

Many other hints as to riding might be given to the beginner, were it not that we should become tedious by the overlength of our lesson. He will hear much of going straight; and we ourselves have said something of the charm of a straight-running fox. But that term of riding straight must be taken with many grains of salt. No man can ride really straight, or should attempt it. Open gates are preferable to high fences, even though some slight loss of ground should occur. Gaps are better than posts and rails. In most countries it is essential to know something of the nature of the landing on to which you are to jump. Roads should be used where the hunting of the hounds can be seen from them;—and are used very frequently when the hunting of the hounds cannot be seen at all. Crushing and rushing, bustling and hustling, cannot be avoided by energetic men whose bosoms are filled by an uncontrollable anxiety to be among the first; but they should be avoided as much as possible as acknowledged

sins. Such a mode of riding is in bad taste; and the sinner who sins and knows that he will sin again, should at least be aware that he is a sinner, and not glory in his defects. To abuse no one, and to take abuse easily,—if it be not of a nature beyond bearing,—should be the resolve of every young hunting man; and we may almost say of every elder also. What though a man should cross you at a fence?—what though he knock you over into a ditch?—what though he ride over you, which certainly is disagreeable? It is of the nature of the sport that it should be rough; and in all collisions each man thinks that the other is in fault. And faults of this nature in the hunting-field are so unavoidable, so unintentional, so certainly the result either of accident or of ignorance, that there is rarely room for anger. But there are many who cannot restrain themselves from sharp words. Such sharp words mean nothing, and are not worthy of a retort. This, however, may be a place proper for warning all young riders not to take their fences too near to those whom they are following. Of all dangers in the hunting-field the worst is that which comes from this offence. No man should allow his horse to follow another at a fence, till his leader is altogether clear from the impediment.

And now in our last lines we will say a word or two about the difficulties of the hunting-field, in order that they who have gone along with us so far may know that difficulties do exist, and that some allowance should be made for them. We shall not here speak of questions of expense, having attended to that subject in our former paper. Although hunting is as free to men nearly as the air that they breathe, they will find in most countries a class of farmers and landowners who object to have horses on their land. They will soon hear it asserted that these objectors are detestable fellows,—and that their objections are frivolous, if not wicked. A friend told us the other day that a man who was determined not to have foxes about his place must be a low Radical. There are men even in England, who do not care for hunting; and it will seem as reasonable to them to declare that a man who wishes to keep his drawing-room to himself must be a stupid Tory. Foxes about hen-roosts are not advantageous; nor do they assist in the preservation of pheasants. A couple of hundred of horsemen about a park, or even about a farm, do not make things look prettier than they were. Certain crops, such as beans and clover, are certainly injured by hunting; and no one can suppose that fences or gates are preserved by the manner in which the sport is conducted. A hunting man has no more legal right to trespass than another, though practice enables him to do so without risk of penalty to himself. All this should be remembered by those who are anxious for the preservation of foxes, and especially by those who do not themselves furnish land to be ridden over, or coverts to be drawn. Some indulgence should be shown to the feelings of non-hunting

men. If this be not done, it may be possible that the objections of the non-hunting men may become stronger than the custom in favour of hunting which still prevails.

And we think that many sportsmen are strongly disposed to expect that more shall be done for them by the Master, and his servants, and by the hunting capacities of the country, than is in truth practicable. We believe that good runs, and certainly that fast runs, are more frequent now than ever they have been since hunting became a sport in England. There is no means of testing accurately the truth of this opinion, and it is one very opposite to the complaints which generally meet our ears in the hunting-field. Men will be frequently heard to declare that hunting now is not what it used to be,—that foxes are scarce,—that they won't run,—that they never go straight,—and that the sport has become so bad, that it is hardly worth a man's while to go out to seek it. This, perhaps, is simply human nature, and is no worse than is said of all amusements and all occupations. Farmers are always being ruined. Trade is always dull. Nobody is ever thriving according to his own account. Nothing is so bad as the theatres. Dinner parties are so dull that it is a folly to go to them. Young men are detestable; and young ladies are so fast, furious, and forward, that they have to be avoided like firebrands. As everything at the present day is bad, why should not hunting be bad also? But not the less do men come out hunting. Arguing in this way, we might pass over the complaints made, were it not that they are effective in driving Masters and huntsmen to attempting more than can actually be done. A huntsman will often find himself driven to lift his hounds almost for miles, to guess the run of a fox, and even to make runs when he has no fox before him,—because so much is demanded from him. If runs manufactured after that fashion will suffice, so be it. We can manufacture them with a drag, so long as the farmers will allow us to ride over their lands on those terms. But if we do this, we shall lose the sport of fox-hunting. Our advice, therefore, to all sportsmen is this;—that they should not expect too much for their day,—and that they should not get out of bed on the wrong side.

"A SURPRISE."

"SHE is dead!" they said to him. "Come away;
Kiss her! and leave her!—thy love is clay!"

They smoothed her tresses of dark brown hair;
On her forehead of stone they laid it fair:

Over her eyes, which gazed too much,
They drew the lids, with a gentle touch;

With a tender touch they closed up well
The sweet thin lips that had secrets to tell;

About her brows and beautiful face
They tied her veil and her marriage-lace;

And drew on her white feet her white silk shoes;—
Which were the whitest no eye could choose!

And over her bosom they crossed her hands;
"Come away!" they said,—"God understands."

And then there was Silence;—and nothing there
But the Silence—and scents of eglantere,

And jasmine, and roses, and rosemary;
And they said, "As a lady should lie, lies she!"

And they held their breath as they left the room,
With a shudder to glance at its stillness and gloom.

But he who loved her too well to dread
The sweet, the stately, the beautiful dead,—

He lit his lamp, and took the key,
And turned it!—Alone again—he and she!

He and she; but she would not speak,
Though he kissed, in the old place, the quiet check.

He and she; yet she would not smile,
Though he called her the name she loved erewhile.

He and she; still she did not move
To any one passionate whisper of love.

Then he said, "Cold lips! and breast without breath!
Is there no voice?—no language of death?"

"A Surprise."

"Dumb to the ear and still to the sense,
But to heart and to soul distinct,—intense?"

"See, now,—I listen with soul, not ear—
What was the secret of dying, Dear?"

"Was it the infinite wonder of all,
That you ever could let life's flower fall?"

"Or, was it a greater marvel to feel
The perfect calm o'er the agony steal?"

"Was the miracle greatest to find how deep,
Beyond all dreams, sank downward that sleep?"

"Did life roll back its record, Dear,
And show, as they say it does, past things clear?"

"And was it the innermost heart of the bliss
To find out so, what a wisdom love is?"

"Oh, perfect Dead! oh, Dead most dear,
I hold the breath of my soul to hear!"

"I listen; as deep as to horrible hell,
As high as to heaven!—and you do not tell!"

"There must be pleasures in dying, Sweet,
To make you so placid from head to feet!"

"I would tell you, Darling, if I were dead,
And 'twere your hot tears upon my brow shed.

"I would say, though the angel of death had laid
His sword on my lips to keep it unsaid.

"You should not ask, vainly, with streaming eyes,
Which of all deaths was the chiefest surprise;—

"The very strangest and suddenest thing
Of all the surprises that dying must bring."

Ah! foolish world! Oh! most kind Dead!
Though he told me, who will believe it was said?"

Who will believe that he heard her say,
With the sweet soft voice, in the dear old way;—

"The utmost wonder is this,—I hear,
And see you, and love you, and kiss you, Dear;

"And am your Angel who was your Bride;
And know, that though dead, I have never died."

E. A.

FASHION IN POETRY.

WHEN we consider the vast scope of Poetry, so vast that it extends beyond the exact definition of language ; when we remember that the Poet's thoughts may clasp in a new harmony all Earth, all Heaven, all Hell ; may out of his subtle combinations of the known and familiar raise a world unknown and marvellous ; that, next to God himself, the Poet is the greatest Creator ; that wherever human thought, human feeling, human fancy, and human passion can follow him, there he may lead ; when we contemplate this immense sovereignty, it seems very strange to see it in association with a word so narrow in its significance as that of Fashion. For if judgment is the sovereignty of reason, poetry is the sovereignty of imagination ; and the imagination of man has not yet penetrated so far as to discover its own limits. All truth is open to the eye of the Poet ; it is his high office to sound its secret depths, to touch it with his sharp sense wherever it may hide ; and with his special gift of sweet proportion in sound to give it utterance ; so that by his music, which rouses and stirs whatever imaginative emotion there is in men of less vivid perception, the delicate mysteries of Nature come to be unveiled and recognised. The passion of the Poet detects and brings to light the secret analogies between the visible and invisible worlds, and shapes them into song. His acute sensibilities respond to the invocations of Nature in her softest breathings ; and through them the highest beauty is revealed to him. It is his art to communicate his impulse to all capable humanity in words of rhythmic order. We hold a rhythmic order to be essential to the true Poet ; though some great authorities,—amongst others Ben Jonson and Sir Philip Sidney,—would admit a claim to the title without it. A little reflection will show that this is wrong, and that measured sound or rhythm, in the expression of the Poet's idea, must be accepted as a distinct boundary-line between the provinces of Prose and Poetry ; otherwise, the Poet's domain would be subject to continual invasion and perplexed by uncertain rights, and great confusion would be the result throughout the world of letters. It does not follow that all rhythm is poetry because we cannot accept poetry without rhythm. This is far from being the case ;—for of a large quantity of rhythm daily produced, a very small portion is even poetical ; and between poetical rhythm and poetry proper, there is still a wide interval. We are not disposed to admit the author of "Mother Hubbard" into the ranks of poets ; although

it is a piece of versification of which the popularity is indisputable, and although it is not entirely deficient in the poetic or tragic elements. In the old lady's evident destitution; in her careful yet hopeless search through her cupboard for something to satisfy her dog's hunger; in his disappointment when nothing is found; in her subsequent hurried walk to the baker's to purchase bread for him; and in the sight of her dead dog which meets her on her return, there is room for the excitement of emotion and compassion;—but the treatment of the circumstances makes them ludicrous. The language is puerile; the introduction to Mother Hubbard and her dog is abrupt; neither their qualities nor their relative positions are made known to us so as to affect our sympathies; and the happy ending, by its suddenness and impossibility, offends all the rules of art, and is not less ludicrous than the cheerful termination of *King Lear*, introduced as an improvement to Shakspeare's tragedy by Tate, and played as such by Garrick and Kemble. It is not the simplicity of the story, but its incongruity and its poverty of expression and detail, which deprive it of pathos. The simple stanzas which tell the history of the *Babes in the Wood* are to be found often included in the same volume of nursery rhymes which contains the only known event in the life of Mrs. Hubbard; but the authors of the two works have nothing else in common; for whoever invented or narrated the life and death of those forlorn children, had in him the genius of a poet. Their mutual love, their tender beauty, their soft submission, their helplessness and their quiet death, the sympathy of Nature in their end, the compassion figured in the action of the little birds, who, after their own manner, perform the burial of the infants, and chant their requiem; all these incidents are so assembled together as to affect the imagination with the poetry of pity; and this unpretending ballad is seldom read without tears. Its metrical form has enough of music in it to give an additional impulse to the emotion, and to make that forcible impression on the memory which is effected by rhythmic order.

The sensibility to the measure of sweet sound leads the Poet on as he writes; he is stirred by his own harmonies, and his thoughts are marshalled to a tune like soldiers stimulated by the appeal of trumpet and drum; while, on the other hand, the rhetorical prose writer, with his mind full of brilliant imagery and passionate impulse, may find himself uncomfortably fettered by the limits of numbered lines; may find in them fences restricting the bound of his imagination, and may become stiff and awkward if he adopts the form of poetry for the expression of his idea. It is probable that if Edmund Burke had written in verse, he would not have been a poet; though if we could admit a rich, abundant, and passionate imagination, associated with language copious and harmonious, to characterise a poet,—without the law of recurring numbers,—he would take a degree in poetry far above that of Pope or Goldsmith. But his works not being

moulded into the symmetry of verse, are not poems, though they are overflowing with poetical affluence.

Every art has its necessary restriction, its form or fashion; but fashion, whatever the original signification of the word, represents now, in its habitual use, a narrowing of form. Fashion is the prevalent custom in some particular direction; it is the taste in vogue, and it is led frequently by a small section of the public, seeking for a stimulus or for distinction in some evident excess. Fashion, as we understand it in ordinary parlance, is a departure from just proportion; an overbalancing of some special quality,—whether we speak of it in reference to costume, to deportment, to architecture, to sculpture, to painting, to music, to letters generally, or to that particular art of letters which is poetry.

If we glance back at the progress of poetry in England from the time of Chaucer to the present day, we shall see periodical fluctuations in its fashion hardly less distinct than those of dress. Chaucer himself was a leader, not a follower; he devised his own form; and, indeed, at that period, in English verse, there was nothing to be followed. He looked to the Italians for suggestions of story, but his manner of telling his story was original. Spenser is less true and vigorous, because the vice of imitation is apparent in his composition. He imitates Chaucer's language, then out of date, and in his elaborate love strains and artificial conceptions of human life he is a plagiarist of Ariosto. He reflects the fashion of his period, the fashion then being Italian; and the extent to which he reflects it is the measure of his departure from truth. But he has sweet tones of his own; promptings of a tender inward music which lift his work into the regions of delight, beyond the sterility of imitation. Sidney's poetry, —of the same school,—was also disfigured by laboured fancy too long drawn out, and by an over-studious cultivation of the passion of love. The imitated affectations of the pastoral style cling about him; but in many of his sonnets true feeling prevails over forced sentiment, and his best compositions charm the ear and the heart by their melodious sadness. It would seem from his essay, written in the defence of poesy, that the poets were objects of popular contempt in his day, and of general animadversion. It was the moment of rest before action, the receding of the waters before the roll of the great billow. Neither was meditative poetry nor dramatic poetry,—which is poetry in action,—in circulation at this time; but in the drama the first chord was sounded which was to find its consummation in a music so majestic, so rich, so rare in its fulness and power, that it can never be surpassed, and has not yet been equalled. The tragedy of "*Gorboduc*," the joint work of Thomas Norton, and of Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, shook off the trammels imposed by a servile respect for Greek models, and moved bravely free from the unities of time and place. This liberty of action was in itself a merit,—a sign of an independent will

in the authors ; and some fine and vigorous passages occur in the dialogue,—passionate thoughts clad in rich garb, such as well became the ambassadors of a coming glory.

Shakspeare and his fellow-labourers for the stage, for the most part, moved in ways of their own. They cast off the forms of antiquity and the fashions of Italy ; and though many of their plots were taken from Italian story, their treatment of the subject had nothing of the Italian manner. A free range was given to the imagination ; passion expressed itself boldly, and with an endless variety of speech. All the resources of the English language were called into play, and it sounded harmonies unknown before. But while the larger number developed beauty out of freedom, Ben Jonson and a few others kept within the limits of fashion, and marred their intellectual gifts by a pedantic exhibition of them,—for pedantry was the fashion of that day. In costume, the starched ruff of the period, parading all its material in a stately display, surrounding the head it sought to adorn with an extensive encumbrance of artificial construction, bears some analogy to the stiff, laboured decorations of thought then in vogue with classical writers. And might not some such analogy be traced between the fashion of letters and the fashion of garments through other ages ? Can we not discern it in the loose style of Charles II.'s time, with its fine fripperies and lace decorations ; with its ribands knotted where knots are needless, suggesting a deficiency on some fair necks ;—with its fastidious trimmings lavishly employed, and decent covering omitted ? This style in dress ran parallel with licentiousness of thought in the poets, combined with an attention to arbitrary trifling rules which constitute the etiquette of poetry. The general formality of apparel, of head-dress and hoop, coat and waistcoat, in the reigns of Anne and the Georges, goes side by side with the cold, carefully trimmed couplets, regular and monotonous versification and elaborated simile of the poets of the same period ; and though this resemblance may seem somewhat fanciful, it is not impossible, or even improbable, that the same influences which affect the general character of the nation, the spirit of which is reflected in the national poetry, have their direct bearing also upon the fashion of dress. But this is a point on which we will not insist. It is enough to say that poetry goes through distinct periodical phases, modes which flow out of that tendency to imitation which may be called a law of humanity. The original poet, directly his power is recognised, is followed by numerous counterfeits. This attempt at reproduction is, in many cases, perhaps even in most, unconscious : poetical temperaments are forcibly struck by the poet's genius, and fall into endless vibrations of sympathy, which they mistake for the vital impulse. Out of this mistake a vast number of poems is produced which are barren of poetry and prolific in such tricks of style as result from exaggerated impressions of the master's manner. In illustration of this fact, we may quote

some of the proceedings of a fictitious character, drawn with much skill by that distinguished American writer, Wendell Holmes, in his novel of "The Guardian Angel." He introduces us to a respectable young shopman, by name Gifted Hopkins, who is the admired poet of a village in New England. Gifted Hopkins produces an interminable succession of poems, which are continually appearing in the local journal, the "Banner and Oracle," and which are marked by all the peculiarities of the Laureate's manner. In short, Gifted Hopkins is the type of the second-hand poet, who helps to set a fashion going. But now let him speak for himself;—

" 'I become more and more assured, Cyprian,' he said, leaning over the counter, 'that I was born to be a poet. I feel it in my marrow. I must succeed. I must win the laurel of fame. I must taste the sweets of——'

" 'Molasses!' said a bare-headed girl of ten, who entered at that moment, bearing in her hand a cracked pitcher. 'Ma wants three gills of molasses.' Gifted Hopkins dropped his subject, and took up a tin measure. . . . made an entry on a slate of 08, and resumed the conversation.

" 'Yes; I am sure of it, Cyprian. The very last piece I wrote was copied in two papers. It was "Contemplations in Autumn." Poetry to me is a delight and a passion. I never know what I am going to write when I sit down; and presently the rhymes begin pounding in my brain . . . and then these rhymes seem to take possession of me like a surprise party, and bring in all sorts of beautiful thoughts, and I write and write, and the verses run measuring themselves out like——'

" 'Ribbins,—any narrer blue ribbins, Mr. Hopkins. Five-eighths of a yard, if you please, Mr. Hopkins?'

"Mr. Gifted Hopkins resumed, 'I do not know where this talent of mine comes from. My father used to carry a chain for a surveyor sometimes, and there is a ten-foot pole in the house he used to measure land with. I don't see why that should make me a poet. My mother was always fond of Dr. Watts's hymns; but so are other young men's mothers, and yet they don't show poetical genius. But wherever I got it, it comes as easy to me to write in verse as to write in prose, almost.'"

The lines which follow will serve as a specimen of the poetry which came so easy:—

"Oh, daughter of the spiced South,
Her bubbly grapes have spilled the wine
That staineth with its hue divine
The red flower of thy perfect mouth."

The village poet's friend, on hearing them, said,—

" 'You modelled this piece in the style of a famous living English poet, did you not?'

“ ‘Indeed, I did not. . . . I never imitate.’ ”

When the poetical young shopman spoke thus, he no doubt believed in himself as many others believe in themselves; and his friend kept silence, as friends will keep silence on such occasions.

The law of reaction operates unfailingly in all human affairs, and by its intervention, imitation, or Fashion, turns into new courses, finds out a new model when the old one has served its turn, and generally chooses it as unlike as possible to the last. This reaction is often sudden and startling, but sometimes is reached by gradual approaches. The striking opposition between the poetical style of the eighteenth and nineteenth century is the result of a series of changes, slowly begun, growing more violent as they draw near the climax.

Thomson, Goldsmith, Gray, and Cowper,—nor should we omit the name of Akenside,—began to feel their way out of the regions of cold didactic art, where Nature appeared only in glimpses;—and even then in a French disguise, advancing towards the dominion of truth and beauty. Goldsmith has little of the emotion and none of the passion, and therefore none of the creative power, of the Poet; but he has a sweet, though somewhat monotonous, versification, a soft sympathy with sorrow, and a delicate sense of beauty. He is an exact describer, a poetical painter rather than a Poet; but it must be remembered, in judging of his merits, that he painted what his predecessors had failed to see. Thomson, it may be urged, had some fine perceptions of Nature, and he moved in front of Goldsmith. This is true: but he had not the simplicity of Goldsmith's manner; and, though he was alive in a considerable degree to the influences of Nature, his representations of her beauty are often far from natural. Cowper, who belongs to the same cluster of morning stars heralding daylight, had a wider range of thought than Goldsmith, but his meditations had too much of the moral distinct from the poetical character, and he was capable of being not only prosaic, but prosy. Thomas Gray appeared in the full dawn of this opening light, tinged with the glory of the unveiled sun. And now Poetry, waking from her long, cold trance, rousing herself from inaction, began to show the exultation of returning life. Under the thrall of no special fashion she moved to new measures, and made music out of all forms of beauty. Burns, in his national dialect, sang undying strains of patriotism and of love; Scott stirred martial enthusiasm with his metrical romance; Campbell sounded a full blast from his war trumpet; Southey, in new strange numbers, harmonious though strange, told tales of wonder, bringing tropical splendour to our sunless shores; Landor wrote classical verse with copious imagery and original thought; Shelley lifted up a song brilliant as that of his own skylark; Keats, inspired by forms of antique beauty, poured out lays of sweet enchantment, and with a new embroidery enriched old fable; and Byron uttered his imaginary wrongs in a moan so musical that he constrained the whole civilised world to

a sudden sympathy, which, for a time, threw every other form of beauty into the shade. He had varied forms of versification, vivid perceptions, and passionate thought, which deserved the admiration of an instructed audience; and he had also exaggerations and grimaces such as please the vulgar, so that he soon became the exclusively popular poet, the favourite model, and the leader of a Fashion which lasted as long as such fashions ever do last. And after that was over came the reign of Wordsworth. Wordsworth was the exact opposite of Byron. His passion was not personal; he wooed Nature with meditative devotion; he listened religiously to her inspirations; he carried no storms into her heart; he suffered her beauty to sink gently into his soul; he sought in her secret influences the sweetness of a divine compassion and the dominion of an eternal hope; in philosophical communings with the invisible he saw God reflected in the universe. Out of the lowest forms he could redeem beauty; not merely the flower and the leaf, the daisy and the primrose, touched his tender thought; every type of suffering humanity, however tainted, won from him the music of sorrow; every utterance of sadness found its answer in his soul; he gathered to his heart all shapes of grief, and it vibrated into melody under the force of pity. It was not his own complaint that stirred the impulse of his song. His poetry was evolved out of the contemplation of things beyond him; out of a present prevailing evil he could shape a remote good. He was an essentially intellectual poet; a poet of substance more than of show, of an imagination more profound than vivid. He was one who strove rather to subdue or to ennoble passion than vehemently to agitate it. He rose as a revolutionary poet, casting off the pageantry and pomp of an ancient dynasty, indifferent to the conventionalities of poetical language, and cultivating great simplicity of diction. He broke down the trim hedge-rows, and opened a new wide field of poetry full of fair varieties. He supplied fresh material for thought to the rising generation; the opposition that he met from the critics acted as a stimulus to his admirers, and all the thinking youth of England enlisted under his banner. In some of his early poems his love of lowly and natural subjects, and of simple language, led him into an exaggeration of triviality; and his ballads of "Betty Foy" and "Peter Bell" were rather fitted for nursery rhymes, to be lisped by infantine lips, than for the gratification of educated men and women. But this exaggeration was probably the cause of his subsequent popularity, because it startled the public into attention by its novelty. It was the penny trumpet which announced the entrance of a monarch on the scene.

Ultimately Wordsworth became the founder of an institution of poetry and metaphysics, setting a fashion both in the method of thought and in the method of language which expressed it. Coleridge, who was his contemporary, and in some measure his colleague, did not produce the same moral effect. He was more felicitous in his

diction, and he was more generally melodious ; but he was less true in feeling ; his sympathies were less extensive, and his imagination was less capable of a sustained effort. He may be regarded as an usher in the school of which Wordsworth was the head-master.

Wordsworth's supremacy over the growing mind of the nation endured for a period of fifteen years, during which time a great deal of prose in measured lines was perpetrated, plagiarising the defects of his art, and falling altogether short of its excellence ; and a great deal of maudlin sentiment was brought into play, aping his finer feeling. But whatever failures arose out of the endeavours to counterfeit the manner of his muse, her inspirations awakened in many souls sensibilities not hitherto cultivated. Needy sickness and neglected and sometimes repulsive infirmities were invested with a new kind of imaginative and tender interest. Wordsworth was sometimes guilty of unmusical lines, of trivial language, and of a diffuseness of style, which, even in prose, could hardly be excused ; but he was never guilty of an ignoble thought. When he was at his best he was such that few could equal him in beauty ; and at all times the suggestions of his poetry were of that kind which tended to enlarge the sphere of benevolent impulses, and to strengthen the best affections. Though fashion has for the present declined from him, it is to be hoped that taste will return for the study of his most excellent productions, and that he is not to occupy for long the position of a decayed poet.

In commenting on the qualities in poetry which so affect the public mind as to lead a fashion, we are induced to meditate what causes operate to exclude the productions of a great poet from immediate popularity. And as such a popularity must be obtained by the approbation of the uncultivated and unthinking masses, we may conclude that it is forfeited by the absence of some such prominent peculiarity as strikes blunt sensibilities or an ignorant apprehension. Now, a prominent peculiarity is a fault, and therefore a perfect work of art will never command fashion until sufficient time has elapsed for the circulation of the verdict of perfect judges. An immediate popularity should be regarded with great distrust by an author whose aim is really excellence.

Milton neither followed nor established any fashion. He drew his inspirations from sources of infinite variety ; and while he made all poetry his study, both in art and nature, his works do not suggest the special manner of any poet ; nor had he any mannerism of his own. His rich harmonies recall something of the music of the Elizabethan dramatists, but there is nothing like a direct imitation of them, and the general scope of his thought is very different. A puritanic gravity modifies his sense of beauty, and his thoughts lift him above the smoke and stir of our earth. Wordsworth comforts earthly sorrow by sharing in it ; Milton seeks to raise men's ideas to the heaven beyond it. Milton is more admired than read. His fame is universal ; his works are a

necessity in every library; and pieces of his poetry are got by heart in schools; but he is seldom taken down from the shelf to be fondly handled; and many a young lady, who knows her Tennyson as well as her prayer-book, would be puzzled if she were asked who wrote "Comus," "Lycidas," and "Samson Agonistes." Like all great poets, he has been plagiarised in particular passages; but he has had no band of loving disciples striving to reflect his forms of beauty. His long, rolling sound, storing up power and delaying the climax, majestic as heaven's own thunder, or as the swelling billows on a smooth, wide shore, awes rather than entices the imagination, and the student shrinks from anything like an attempt at reproduction. Therefore, Milton stands alone, apart from Fashion in Poetry; and therefore we have not introduced his name according to chronological order in these pages.

We have shown how Wordsworth took a high place in popular favour. It is time to speak of Tennyson, who succeeded him. In the glow of Tennyson's light Wordsworth's has paled almost to the point of extinction. There are so few instances of resemblance between the two poets, that it is hardly worth while to point out the difference. Tennyson's poetry is not slowly gathered out of meditation on external objects; it springs from a creative force, a vital inspiration and impetuous movement of the brain or heart, or both, which agitates every thought, and constrains every outward form of existence to sympathy with its own varying moods. Nature is compelled to consort with his fervent Genius. Under his dominion she is seldom suffered to rest. All her attributes undergo a change in the transitions of his swift emotion. In one of its phases, Time is a maniac, scattering dust, and Life a fury, slinging flame; in another, the stars are innumerable cold, pitiless eyes; in another, the blossoms dropped by the laburnum are wells of fire: in almost all there is a stir and glow, endless vibration, without any apparent point of rest. Goldsmith's "pensive hour" is unknown to Tennyson; his thought is passionate, not still. All his perceptions are intense. His pictures are coloured as vividly as Turner's; his piercing vision descries objects unseen by ordinary eyes, assembles images from far-off worlds, and concentrates a whole universe of beauty into the space of a single line. In his power of concentration he is equalled by only one other poet, and that one is Dante. But he has not the sustained power of Dante, because he has not the same capability of repose. It is in the prophet's chariot of fire that he ascends his heaven of invention, and woe be to the mortal man who seeks to hang on to that flaming car! Yet how many do seek it,—how many, clinging to its blazing wheels, rise but a short way to fall down in a fatal swoon, which leaves them delirious for ever. That they should mistake this delirium for the spirit of the prophet is a thing worthy of lamentation, but it is inevitable that their mistake should last till

they have passed away altogether, and posterity has decided on their claims. What matter? say some indulgent critics. Why should they not enjoy a pleasant delusion? And if their works obtain a temporary popularity, who should grudge it to them? To this we reply, —It is of infinite matter to art that bad art should be suppressed, and it is a subject for serious regret that a great poet should have given the impulse to an evil fashion. The school of Tennyson is sensuous as the school of Wordsworth was spiritual. A tendency to excess in warmth of colour and in passionate sensation, which distinguishes Tennyson as a poet, is so exaggerated by his disciples as to approach insanity. They are in a perpetual whirlwind; their consciousness of life consists in successive storms of passion; they are perpetually on the fret; and Nature, which, according to Wordsworth, never did betray the heart that loved her, assaults them with perpetual rage and unlimited treacheries. No peaceful green spots for them! Every blade of grass is a tongue of fire; every branch of a tree is an inimical, cruel arm; the stars throb like fevered pulses; the morning dewdrop is a scalding tear; the heavens are either lurid or so importunately blue that they affect the soul with a sense of oppression; seas are streaked in crimson as with blood; kisses are red; thoughts are red; corn-fields are sanguinary with the fatal poppy's dye; you move in a general conflagration; trouble and heat prevail everywhere; nothing is comfortable, and nothing is cool. The compensation which the poets seek from this state of things is an occasional excess of bliss,—a swooning under too much sweetness, —a joy prolonged upon the edge of pain,—a languor generated by overwhelming perfume,—an intoxication proceeding from too deep a draught of beauty,—a sharp agony from the scent of a woman's hair, —a general smothering under silken hangings and purple coverlets. This poisonous luxury may be welcome as a variety of pain, but it is very unlike peace. It is mere physical excitement; and it has no tendency to exalt the imagination.

Another fault of this school of poetry is a prodigality of imagery. Images succeed each other so fast, that they cease to make an impression; and the mind of the reader is overloaded and weary. The highest art of the poet suggests more than it gives, and leaves the stimulated imagination with space for fresh weaving, and a margin for some further embroideries of the fancy. When this is done there is a spiritual union between the poet and his disciple; and there is a great delight afforded by the consciousness of an intellectual expansion and growing sensibilities. A little song introduced into a work called "*Phantastes*," by a writer too little known as yet, may be quoted here as a model of this kind of excellence:—

"Alas! how easily things go wrong—
A sigh too much, or a kiss too long,

And there follows a mist and a weeping rain,
And life is never the same again.

"Alas! how hardly things go right—
'Tis hard to watch, in a summer night,
For the sigh will come, and the kiss will stay,
And the summer night is a winter day."

There is a whole history of sweet sorrow suggested in these two simple stanzas;—suggested, not told. The reader's fancy is touched with the sad music of this compassionate strain; not limited by exact details of the broken promise, the lost hope, or the shame and the separation. A profound pathos surrounds the subjects thus dealt with; it leaves food for tender meditation and sacred pity. The seed of sympathy thus dropped in the heart has room to strike deep roots and bring forth fruit and flower.

An author of the more fashionable school, the school of excess, would never have left the topic so unfettered. How many cold moons, how many crimson suns, how many quivering stars, how many leapings of hot blood, how many stings and agonies, how many images of death and slaughter and ravine, how many curses on false creeds and disquisitions on criminal codes, and racking winds, and cracking leaves, and sea storms, and fiery embracings, and wild pulsations, such a poet would have brought to bear upon the song, till the listener sank beneath the burden, unable to conceive another idea!

All the faults of the school of exaggeration have reached their full consummation in the genius of Mr. Swinburne. He has the fatal gift of a facility of melodious expression which far outruns his power of thought and imagination. He has a considerable repertory of fine words, but they are employed to decorate a gross imagination and an unsound thought. The want of solid matter to work with has reacted perniciously on the manner of his diction, and made it an instrument eminently fit for disguising the want of a clear meaning when it is absent, and eminently unfit for expressing it when it is present. Swinburne's melody itself, though undeniably admirable in some passages, is not faultless. The trick of alliteration is enticing for a time, but once discovered and thrust upon the attention, becomes very wearisome; and to obtain the effect of versification great violence is done to the language; startling transpositions, reckless disregard of all order in construction, are the very rules of Swinburne's composition. Sonorous epithets are profusely scattered, which cannot possibly make sense with the noun nearest to them; a wild and unbounded license is the law of the poet, who seems to think mere abundance the essence of poetry, as if the fairy's decree of the dropping of toads from the mouth at every spoken word was no less precious than that of pearls, if only the quantity ejected were equally large.

Whoever undertakes to read one of Mr. Swinburne's works all

through, will have much depravity to encounter. He seems to pray for degradation, as Milton prayed for elevation of thought, before he wrote. He revels in an imagination foul as Vulcan's stithy. In his attempt to exalt vice, he has lowered his art. Big-sounding words will not compensate for the want of great ideas; and the love of the beautiful, which is the foundation of all art, is continually revolted by Mr. Swinburne. His play of Chastelard may be instanced as an example of his want of artistic skill. It is so tedious,—though not long,—that the student finds it a heavy labour to reach the end of the volume. This tediousness is due to the monotony of uninterrupted vice,—and to its untruth. Every personage and every statement in this play is of that kind to which we should say, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity."

Mary Stuart, bad enough in history, is made worse in Mr. Swinburne's representation. She is base in semblance as well as in fact, and her presence on the scene is a constant offence, because it has not the compensation of contrast from the introduction of any other virtue. Regan and Goneril were as bad, but they had an innocent sister; and in all Shakspeare's plays, and in all true pictures of life, the existence of some good will be discerned. Mary Stuart's coarse fondling of the lover whom she dooms to execution, is hardly endurable; but her lover knows it, and tolerates it, and adores her, and blasphemes God for her sake. According to their degree her waiting-maids also are vicious, following her example at a respectful distance; and at last, when Murray appears upon the scene,—Murray whom history recognises as an upright man,—and we hope for something less ignoble to dwell upon, he acts as ill as all the rest.

A sameness of wickedness is not less fatiguing than a sameness of virtue, and is less excusable; for if a man be tiresome by seeking to instil goodness, we at least give him credit for a benevolent intention. Nor can unmeasured criminality be redeemed by such supposed graces of poetry as are assembled to make up the excess of Mr. Swinburne's style. When Chastelard, awaiting his execution, apostrophises the Queen his mistress, the insanity and grossness of his thought, his wordy rant,—which we feel to be rant because it is not true passion,—the disgusting images which he calls up, turn aside all sympathy. We have not space to quote many of the lines, nor if we had should we wish to do it; but here is a specimen which our readers may judge:—

"Ah! in my weary, dusty space of sight,
Her face will float with heavy scents of hair;
And fire of subtle amorous eyes and lips,
More hot than wine, full of sweet wicked words,
Babbled against mine own lips

"I do believe
This fire shall never quite burn out to the ash,

And leave no heat and flame upon my dust,
For witness where a man's heart has burnt up.
For all Christ's work this Venus is not quelled,
But reddens at the mouth with blood of man,
Sucking between small teeth the sap o' the veins;
Dabbling with death her little tender lips,
A bitter beauty, poisonous pearled mouth.

"Ah! fair love,
Fair fearful Venus made of deadly foam,
I shall escape you somehow with my death.
Your splendid supple body and mouth on fire,
And Paphian breath that bites the lips with heat.
I had best die"

We have selected this passage as one of the most moderate, least strained, and least unpleasant of Mr. Swinburne's amorous rhapsodies. This false art may strike some fancies by its violence, but it will never satisfy a disciplined judgment or a cultivated imagination, and therefore it will not outlive its own hour. So let it live and let it die.

We do not require unmixed strains of aspiring virtue, nor personages who are models of perfection, nor anything that has in it the untruth of disproportion. In its balance of good and evil the drama of the poet should represent the actual drama of life, only raised somewhat by those exalted moods of the imagination and by those assembled treasures of language which give life to poetry.

In the plays which have outlived the fashion of their day we shall find all these qualities. They are apparent in Goethe's "Faust" and "Egmont," in Schiller's "Wallenstein" and "Don Carlos," in Henry Taylor's "Artevelde" and "St. Clement's Eve;"—and these works are fit subjects for careful study.

They show humanity in its strength and weakness; and the intellectual vigour of the poet is paramount throughout. The great dramatist has a mastery over his own passion which enables him perfectly to conceive and to shape that of his fictitious characters, and his personal presence is only recognised by the skill and wisdom of his work. This is eminently true of the tragedy of "Wallenstein" and the dramatic poem of "Artevelde."

In "Wallenstein" there is great variety and distinctness of character without any excess of perfection or of atrocity; there is human frailty, and even baseness, to be found in it, but there is also high thought and noble action, and the beauty of the poem is heightened by a pure and tender love pervading it. There is the keen sense of beauty, which is the Poet's special privilege, combined with the fruits of meditation and the experience of life. There are no puling, sentimental, nor overstrained agonies to oppress the reader. It is an excellent work of art.

"Artevelde" is so far a drama of the same order that it also deals

with historic events, and with life in camps and battle-fields, and shows in the principal character a somewhat rare combination of profound reflection and energetic action. But the dominion of the judgment over the imagination is more complete in "Artevelde" than in "Wallenstein," and it exhibits more power of concentration. Schiller's fault as a poet is diffuseness, by which he loses force. Henry Taylor is terse in expressions, his thought finds the right word at once and does not exhaust its energy by a needless expansion. He is therefore never tedious; but if the drama of Artevelde has more masculine strength than that of "Wallenstein" it has less ideal beauty, especially in those scenes which treat of the tenderest relations between man and woman. Schiller's Thekla is a woman invested with divine attributes, but still instinct with the feelings of humanity. Taylor's Adriana is a fine vision without substance and therefore without personal identity; a gleam of light which has its source in heavenly regions, and stirs hopes and yearnings beyond our horizon, but which is a cold radiance conveying to us none of the glow of human affection. The decline of Artevelde, after the loss of his pure bride Adriana, to a passionate affection for the fallen woman Elena, has been a subject of censure to many critics, because it degrades the hero of the drama; but as the circumstance is treated, it is not poetically untrue. The condition of mind which accompanied Artevelde's sinking fortunes, with the loss of his heart's best hope, laid him especially open to the access of that strong compassion which first moved his thought towards a wretched woman: young, beautiful, and misused. Adriana is the poet's aspiration, his ideal of human love. Elena is the centre of his pity. And thus the most passionate emotions of a poetic imagination are embodied,—the striving after the divine light and the sorrow for the fallen star; and perhaps there is no passage in the play more essentially pathetic than Artevelde's words at his final parting from Elena:—

"Unhappy girl,
The curse of beauty was upon thy birth:—
Nor love bestowed a blessing."

This is suggestive poetry on which the mind loves to linger sadly and fondly, following up the indications of the poet with fancies sweet and bitter. Elena, it must be remembered, was not dragged down from the fair heights of an honest life by Artevelde, but redeemed from lower depths by her affection for him. The same sound thought, felicitous diction, and variety and truth of character, are to be found in "St. Clement's Eve" as in "Artevelde," modified by the difference of time, place, and circumstance. The impetus of a revolutionary movement accompanied all the action of "Artevelde," in some measure excluding the softer influences of tender and sweet emotion. The tragedy of "St. Clement's Eve" is less dramatic in construction, but it

contains more of ideal poetry and subdues the mind of the reader to a profounder sympathy. The subject of this drama is the suffering of a kingdom which sinks into inanition under the pressure of that inevitable disaster which is involved in the insanity of its monarch. The people, conscious of impending ruin, impute this strange sorrow to the special visitation of God, and turn for relief to the darkest and most lamentable forms of superstition. A deep tragic sadness overshadows every scene; a beautiful sadness without spasm or contortion, without clamour and fury; not wordy, not violent, not excessive. The principal female character, Iolande, is pure and tender, human in her affection and in her calamity. The ill star which hangs over the realm affects her inner life. With a virtuous mind and innocent heart she is made subject to the remorse of a guilty love, and with the noblest aspirations of religious devotion. She falls the victim of fanatical credulity. The lines in which Orleans declares his love to her may be quoted as an example of that musical sweetness in which a tender poetical emotion finds its truest expression.

“Once in a midnight march—’twas when the war
 With Brittany broke out—tired with the din
 And tumult of the host, I left the road,
 And in the distant cloisters of a wood
 Dismounted and sat down. The untroubled moon
 Kept through the silent skies a cloudless course,
 And kiss’d and hallow’d with her tender light
 Young leaf and mossy trunk, and on the sward
 Black shadows slumber’d, softly counterchanged
 With silver bars. Majestic and serene,
 I said, is Nature’s night, and what is man’s?
 Then from the secret heart of some recess
 Gush’d the sweet nocturns of that serious bird
 Whose love-note never sleeps. With glad surprise
 Her music thrill’d the bosom of the wood,
 And like an angel’s message enter’d mine.
 Why wander back my thoughts to that night march?
 Can you divine? or must I tell you why?
 The world without and world within this precinct
 Are to my heart—the one the hurrying march
 With riot, outrage, ribaldry, and noise
 Insulting night; the other, deep repose
 That listens only to a love-taught song,
 And throbs with gentlest joy.”

We might dwell longer on such a theme, but the limits of our space forbid further comment on these plays, and with a backward glance of regret we part from them.

But we have no time to dwell further on these things, for we have not yet mentioned the name of Robert Browning, who takes a very high place in the rank of living poets. He stands apart from fashion, but young students find a wonderful fascination in the intricacies of his style, and in the robust energy of his thought. None but a studious

reader can ever expect to find pleasure from his writing. He is obscure from excessive concentration, and his ideas constrain the words to do their bidding like rebellious slaves rather than lead them as natural subjects. The struggle of infinite aspirations trying to work themselves out with finite instruments, which recurs again and again in Browning's poems under various aspects, seems to have penetrated his mind till it has become embodied in his language. In Browning's slighter poems the peculiarities of style sometimes degenerate into mannerism; in the more serious ones they are recognised as the appropriate product of a marked individual tendency of thought. We find much that is unlike our ordinary experience, but there is generally a reason for it. Browning cannot be accused of being harsh for mere want of skill. The structure of his verse is deliberate and often highly artificial. His *Abt Vogler* is an extreme instance of complex versification. But he is sometimes perfectly smooth and flowing, as in the *Romance in Paracelsus*; and he is capable of a simple style, as we find in his incident of the French camp.

It is to be hoped, however, that he will never become the idol of a school of copyists, for his idiosyncrasies would become intolerable affectations in an attempt at reproduction; and, indeed, no imitation of a special manner will ever be fruitful of good. Poets must study poetry, but it must be the poetry of the universe as it is developed in all things, whether in the written records of sublime ideas which the great poems of the world afford, or in the abounding beauty revealed in the works of the Almighty Creator.

UNE MARQUISE.

A RHYMED MONOLOGUE IN THE LOUVRE.

"Belle Marquise, vos beaux yeux me font mourir d'amour."—M. JOURDAIN.

I.

As you sit there at your ease,
O Marquise !
And the men flock round your knees
Thick as bees,
Mute at every word you utter,
Servants to your least frill flutter,
"Belle Marquise !"—
As you sit there growing prouder,
And your ringed hands glance and go,
And your fan's frou-frou sounds louder,
And your "beaux yeux" flash and glow ;—
Ah, you used them on the Painter,
As you know,
For the Sieur Larose spoke fainter,
Bowing low,
Thanked Madame and Heaven for mercy
That each sitter was not Circe,—
Or at least he told you so ;—
Growing proud, I say, and prouder
To the crowd that come and go,
Dainty Deity of Powder,
Fickle Queen of Fop and Bean,
As you sit where lustrous strike you
Sure to please,
Do we love you most or like you,
"Belle Marquise ?"

II.

You are fair ; O yes, we know it
Well, Marquise ;
For he swore it, your last poet,
On his knees ;
And he called all heaven to witness
Of his ballad and its fitness,
"Belle Marquise ;"—

You were everything in ère,—
 With exception of sévère,—
 You were belle, cruelle, rebelle,
 And the rest of rhymes as well ;
 You were "Reine," and "Mère d'amour ;"
 You were "Vénus à Cythère ;"
 "Sappho mise en Pompadour,"
 And "Minerve en Parabère ;"
 You had every grace of heaven
 In your most angelic face,
 With the nameless finer leaven
 Lent of blood and courtly race ;
 And he added, too, in duty
 Ninon's wit and Bouffler's beauty ;
 And La Vallière's "yeux veloutés"
 Followed these ;
 And you liked it when he said it,—
 On his knees,—
 And you kept it, and you read it,
 "Belle Marquise !"

III.

Yet with us your toilet graces
 Fail to please,
 And the last of your last faces,
 And your "mise ;"
 For we hold you just as real,
 "Belle Marquise,"
 As your "Bergers" and "Bergères,"
 "Iles d'amour," and "Batelières ;"
 As your "parcs," and your Versailles,
 Gardens, grottoes, and "rocailles ;"
 As your Naiads and your trees ;
 Just as near the old ideal
 Calm and ease,
 As the Venus there, by Coustou,—
 That a fan would make quite flighty,—
 Is to her the gods were used to,
 Is to grand Greek Aphrodite,
 Sprung from seas.
 You are just a porcelain trifle,
 "Belle Marquise,"
 Just a thing of puffs and patches,
 Made for madrigals and catches,
 Not for heart-wounds, but for scratches,
 O Marquise !

Just a pinky porcelain trifle

“Belle Marquise,”

Pâte tendre, rose Dubarry,

Quick at verbal point and parry,

Clever, certes ;—but to marry,

No, Marquise !

IV.

For your Cupid, you have clipped him,

Rouged and patched him, nipped and snipped him,

And with chapeau-bras equipped him,

“Belle Marquise,”

Just to arm you through your wife-time,

And the languors of your life-time,

“Belle Marquise,”—

Say,—to trim your toilet tapers,

Or,—to twist your hair in papers,

Or,—to wean you from the vapours ;—

As for these,

You are worth the love they give you,

Till a fairer face outlive you,

Or a younger grace shall please ;

Till the coming of the crows' feet,

And the backward turn of beaux' feet,

“Belle Marquise,”—

Till your frothed-out life's commotion

Settles down to Ennui's Ocean,

Or a dainty sham devotion,

“Belle Marquise.”

V.

No : we neither like nor love you,

“Belle Marquise !”

Lesser lights we place above you,

Milder merits better please.

We have passed from Philosophdom

Into sterner modern days,—

Crown contented in our oafdom,

Giving grace not all the praise ;

And, en partant, Arsinoë,—

Without malice whatsoever,—

We shall counsel to our Chloë

To be rather good than clever ;

For we find it hard to smother

Just one little thought, Marquise !

Wittier perhaps than any other,—

You were neither Wife nor Mother,

“Belle Marquise !”

A. D.

PROGRESS.

"PROGRESS—Bah! Now for a discourse on things in general,—much fuss and little way, like the old lady's journey round the lawn all night." Thus, I can well imagine, half sneers, half snarls, the judicious reader, as his eye falls on the title of this article.

I appreciate his shrewdness. Vast, vague, difficult, intangible, the subject is; and I am modestly conscious of my inability to do it justice. But stronger than this consciousness is my feeling that something to the purpose requires to be said on progress. Is it not precisely on this matter that we are all in a state of uneasy indecision?—all, except perhaps the London tradesman, whose bosom swells with proud satisfaction beneath his red waistcoat, as he imbibes from the inspired columns of Jupiter Junior the persuasion,—delicately, almost insensibly suggested, rather than put in so many words,—that he, representing as he does the infallible "public," is the ultimate judge in all controversies, and stands upon the very apex of civilisation. The question is not by any means so simple as our friend in the red waistcoat is "given to understand." Several of the cleverest and most remarkable men in England take a different view of it from that derived by him from his oracle. They allege that, instead of going forward, or even standing still, we are falling backward. And so the question will recur in a teasing, tantalising form. It is the year of grace 1868; whether we choose or not, we are "in the foremost files of time," and have the advantage of all that has been done in the past; the roar of our machinery, the din of our revolutions, echoes through the solar system; can we not, then, make up our minds whether our progress is a reality and a gain, or a delusion and a mistake? "Never mind," you reply. "Have a slice of sirloin from Mr. McCombie's ox, pledge me in this superlative sherry, and know that, while Cadiz stretches out her hand to Aberdeen over England's social board, things cannot be in a bad way." Pleasant,—and perhaps wise; but, sooth to say, it is not so easy to be a Gallio in this case. Voracious and bibacious the healthy Englishman is; but it is necessary to his comfort that he retain a fair opinion of himself; and the chances are that, if he tries in society any of those optimist sallies, he will be contemptuously gloomed upon by the smartest people present as a bit of a fool. Will he, nill he, therefore, it is necessary to his peace that he have some precise, intelligent, plain, and tenable notions on the subject of progress. I shall hardly profess to furnish

him with these on the present occasion; but the question has been a good deal in my thoughts, and it may be of some use to him to accompany me in a cursory but not altogether careless survey of the ground.

To begin with, let us have an idea, as distinct as may be, of the dark side of our affairs, and the indictment brought against us by those who mourn and moralise over the decadence of the time. They are indisputably entitled to a hearing. There are not at this moment in Europe two men whose genius is more frankly admitted than that of Mr. Carlyle and Mr. Ruskin. That they are both characterised, more or less, by extravagance and eccentricity, we shall grant; but they have produced works remarkable not more for splendour of diction than for vigour of thought, acuteness of observation, fineness of moral sensibility, and force of moral judgment. They tell us, with constantly deepening emphasis as they increase in years, that the whole system of our affairs,—political, social, moral, intellectual, material,—is in a state of wreck and ruin. More than thirty years ago Mr. Carlyle, abandoning that serene hopefulness and earnest gaiety which lent so rare a charm to his earlier essays, began to talk of “a distracted society, vacant, prurient,”—an age “which slumbers and somnambulates, which cannot speak, but only screech and gibber.” For thirty years the river of his indignation and scorn has rolled on in swelling volume; and if those waters of Marah were collected into a single reservoir, it would be larger than could contain all the bitterest wailings and denunciations of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel put together. Mr. Carlyle sees around him “a world all rocking and plunging, like that old Roman one when the measure of its iniquities was full; the abysses, and subterranean and supernal deluges, plainly broken loose; in the wild, dim-lighted chaos all stars of heaven gone out.” In Mr. Carlyle’s latest deliverance on the condition-of-England question, his far-famed “Shooting of Niagara and After,” he reiterates his forebodings, drapes all his shadows in deeper black, and sums up with the announcement that it must, ere long, come to street-fighting, the big English “slave-nation” being taken by the beard by Mr. Carlyle and a company of brave men.

Mr. Ruskin, whose earlier works were in like manner canopied with an atmosphere of calm gladness and steadfast hope, felt at a certain point in his career his spirit so stirred within him by the sins and sorrows he beheld, that he turned from the placid fields of art, rushed into the wilderness of political economy, and, re-appearing in a garment of camel’s hair, and with a leathern girdle about his loins, commenced shouting “Woe, woe,” into the ears of a generation which had liked him much better in his previous capacity. England, as he now sees her, is a withered and semi-fatuous beldam, “with her right hand casting away the souls of men, and with her left the gifts of God.” Few things are more saddening than to read Mr. Ruskin’s

latest books ; for not only is the melancholy which pervades them profound, but you perpetually feel that it is a brave and radiant soul which has been darkened, and that the murk of night has returned upon the dewdrops of morning. Mr. Carlyle's main cry against us is that we want strength ; Mr. Ruskin's, that we want virtue. Mr. Carlyle says we have become a nation of sentimental dreamers, and whining, dawdling incompetents ; Mr. Ruskin, that all the motives of our life have been swallowed up in cruel, vulturous, insatiable greed.

Were we to take the suffrage of the poets on this question, they would not yield us a reassuring verdict. Mr. Tennyson has, on the whole, been a cheerful though a deeply thoughtful and earnest poet. In one of his poems, however, the much-canvassed "Maud," he takes formal diagnosis of the time, and never did physician speak less hopefully of a case. "Wretchedest age since time began,"—such is the sum of his opinion. And the younger minstrels,—the Arnolds, Swinburnes, and others, who are seated on the steps of Tennyson's throne,—testify, by the tone of unrest and uneasiness, or even of weariness and disappointment, which can be heard throughout their poems, that, bright and sportive as is their melody at times, they are dimly conscious that the spirit of the age is funereal rather than festive.

In brief, a number of the most gifted and influential men of the day hold that the time is desperately out of joint. In the tumult of what we call our progress they discern the cracking and rending of the timbers in a falling house ; our boasted force, they say, is but the heat of fever or the paroxysm of delirium. The blackness of darkness is eclipsing at noon the sun of our national glory, and blight and mildew have struck our standing corn and blooming flowers. Our material prosperity is hollow, precarious, and, such as it is, purchased with an amount of horror, ugliness, choking foulness, which literally blackens the face of nature in our manufacturing districts, and extinguishes at once the colours of the world, and all that is bright and brave and beautiful in man's soul. Our social life is a masked ball of simpering artificialities, skipping, smirking graciousities, of corpses that grin a mere pretence of life and mirth. Our literature is a jargon of histrionic excitements, or a universal crackling of fool's laughter. Our science and our philosophy are mechanical, materialistic. Our religion is a cant, a fanaticism, an imbecility, or a doubt. Our government is a pitiful see-saw of party against party, the work of the country left undone and inefficiency revelling in all departments, while the everlasting problem, whether the sublime Greek or the sublime Trojan,—Arcades ambo, humbugs both,—shall mount the throne of office, gets itself solved.

Enough ;—such is the "doleful song" chanted by these eminent persons. A great relief it would be to sniff it aside as "a tale of little meaning, though the words are strong." But are there no facts which, contemplated not through the fiery lenses of genius

but with the unimpassioned eyes of common-sense, convey the impression that there is a painful significance in the strain? What imagination, haunted with terror or gangrened by hatred, had dreamed such dreams as were shown by the Trades' Union Commission to be facts? The public stood aghast at the revelation of rattening; it was as if one of the monsters of a former epoch, suddenly uprearing itself from its slime, had appeared in our streets. Was there ever anything in this world more astonishingly and malignantly bad than Fenianism? Put together the incoherence of its aims, the senseless atrocity of its methods, the brainless, heartless fierceness which always characterises it, and you will search history in vain for a ghastlier portent. Poor England, knowing with absolute certainty that to hand over Ireland to the Fenians, with a view to the establishment of a Fenian republic, would be to constitute a hell upon earth, and commit the most stupendous crime in history, has been brought to her wits' end in dealing with these men. If the Fenian leaders had been capable of a relenting emotion,—if one touch of fine or high-toned sentiment could have penetrated the obduracy of their hearts,—they would have been softened by the forbearance and conciliation which reached a climax of thoughtful tenderness in the reprieve of the Irish rebel, Burke. At no other period of the world,—in no other country in our own day, except, perhaps, the United States of America,—would Burke have escaped the gallows. Had the feeling of England towards Ireland been any other save earnest compassion and invincible good-will,—anxiously, resolutely tender, as the spirit of a mother when she hangs over her sick, fractious, wailing, frenzy-stricken child,—that gentleman would have died. With instinct brutish and forlorn, the Fenians could see in mercy only a sign of weakness, and went from worse to worse.

Look, for a moment, at the monetary and commercial world. Convulsions, periodically recurring, shake the great cities of Europe and America,—and, most of all, the metropolis of Great Britain,—as if by the roll of an earthquake. On those occasions the spectacles presented in the "City" suggest to the mind the aspect of a town at whose gates thunder the cannon of a besieging army. Pale and haggard men hurry about in an agony of apprehension. The millionaire of yesterday is the pauper of to-day. The tide of calamity sends its long billows into remote country nooks, licking up the substance of widow and orphan, and hurrying persons brought up to a far different fate into the workhouse or the lunatic asylum. The laws which govern these convulsions are most imperfectly known; but it is universally acknowledged that they are connected with dishonest trading, with over-stimulated competition, with maniacal intensity of desire to become rich. And is it not widely felt that not only commercial soundness, but manufacturing and mechanical efficiency in all provinces, has suffered from this base wish to make

money? The right and noble ambition to produce a good article and have it appreciated has, it is said, yielded to the mean and abnormal ambition to be well paid; and George Eliot's Adam Bede has become an ideal of the past in England. Certainly, when we look at the wretched agglomerations of brick, mud, and wood which are now run up by building speculators on all sides of London, and recall the workmanship of the days when companies of brother masons reared our Gothic cathedrals, whose glory will live for ever, and whose very framework is as adamant, we cannot help entertaining misgivings as to the continuance of the true kingly pride in the breasts of England's workmen.

Shall we break, then, into a shriek of execration and contempt, and declare that the only true prophets are the prophets of despair? Not yet. The source of all error is incomplete induction. There are some facts not touched upon in the preceding paragraphs which a resolutely candid mind will take along with it before pretending to arrive at a conclusion upon the general question.

The first phenomenon of a re-inspiring kind which may strike us as surprising after the panorama of death at which we have been looking, but which is happily indubitable, is the existence of clear, joyous, and successful activity in the department of physical science. Never since the gates of the tomb were shut upon "deep-browed Verulam" did that bark which, to the eye of his imagination, sailed periodically from the New Atlantis on its voyage in quest of light, return so richly freighted with nature's gold and jewels, nature's rifled secrets and hidden powers, as it has returned many times in our day. It is not enough to say that the sciences have grown,—they have shot suddenly from dwarfish into gigantic dimensions. If you glance over that most interesting sketch of the history of geology given by Sir Charles Lyell in his great work, you will be amazed at the childish absurdity of the views touching the structure and modelling of the world and the facts of animal and vegetable life entertained by men of high ability not a hundred years ago. Little more than a quarter of a century has gone by since Lord Macaulay, who, to the last, continued on the side of those who dare to be proud of their country, and hopeful of her future, summed up, in one of his well-packed but freely-moving sentences, the fruits of the Baconian philosophy:—"It has lengthened life; it has mitigated pain; it has extinguished diseases; it has increased the fertility of the soil; it has given new securities to the mariner; it has furnished new arms to the warrior; it has spanned great rivers and estuaries with bridges of form unknown to our fathers; it has guided the thunderbolt innocuously from heaven to earth; it has lighted up the night with the splendour of the day; it has extended the range of the human vision; it has multiplied the power of the human muscles; it has accelerated motion; it has annihilated distance; it has facilitated intercourse,

correspondence, all friendly offices, all despatch of business; it has enabled man to descend to the depths of the sea, to soar into the air, to penetrate securely into the noxious recesses of the earth, to traverse the land in cars which whirl along without horses, and the ocean in ships which run ten knots an hour against the wind." The enumeration had, at the time it was made, that best literary force which comes of moderation and veracity. In its main points it still continues exact and impressive. But how far does it fall short of a just description of what physical science has now achieved! We have seen it revolutionise the whole art and practice of war, military and naval. We have seen it, by subtle dealing with the mysteries of colour and of light, analyse the sun. We have seen it track the tempest on the deep, and commence a series of meteorological inductions which may ultimately rob the storm of its terrors. We have seen it solve the ancient problems of the source of the Nile and the North-West passage. We have seen it not only convey the lightning innocuously into the earth, but lay it beneath the ocean to bear man's messages.

This prosperous and conquering activity of science is a most important fact. It might, not without plausibility, be maintained that it is in itself adequate to the refutation of the school of despair. Intensely earnest as is the activity in question, it is not a fitful or feverish activity. It is calm in its might, like nature's power in early summer, that turns the landscape green. Here, then, is at least one great force which remains sound. Can the body be incurably diseased if one limb is vividly and healthily alive? And can any one say that the powers of this force for good are necessarily incompetent to grapple with our social ills, whatever they may be?

We must tread cautiously here, as in every instance where we have to deal with complex and difficult questions. The scientific activity of the age demonstrates that we are not suffering from the worst of national maladies,—failure of stamina. We are not dying of atrophy. The common statement made with great force and brilliancy by Mr. Matthew Arnold in one of his recent poems, that the civilised world is at this moment in a position analogous to that of the Roman empire in the wane of ancient civilisation, is incorrect. The Roman, "with haggard eyes," gloated over the agonies of gladiators, the combats of wild beasts. The English officer in India takes note of geological formations in his visits to the hills, and gazes with passionate rapture on a new flower. Our children delight in botany and conchology; and our Brewsters, Lyells, Murchisons, testify, by the keen-sparkling interest in their eyes when any accession is made to their store of scientific fact, that the freshness of nature is not exhausted by enjoying it for fourscore years.

On the other hand, it would be rash to conclude that great scientific activity is a pledge that a period of crisis or calamity is not approaching.

Science has never been in a more vivacious state than in France before the revolution of 1793. If ever nation passed through a crisis of agony, the French nation passed through such a crisis in the days of the Terror, and words and ideas must change their significance before we can characterise that period as anything but disastrous. The strength of the French people, however, was not exhausted, and the spasm of national anguish was the prelude to a new and higher development of the national life. In our own time and country we have scientific activity in a superlative degree, without that fierce and embittered antagonism of class to class which was the fatal system in France before the revolution. We may regard it, therefore, as a thing of good omen.

Rattening, and the various exhibitions of proletarian injustice, turbulence, and insubordination which associate themselves in the public mind with rattening, are in themselves as bad as they could well be; but if we steadily consider them in their exact magnitude, and in relation to the circumstances under which they have taken place, they will not strike us into despair. In judging of them, one or two points ought to be distinctly borne in mind.

The practice, though sympathised with by working men to an extent which is sad and alarming, was repudiated by the great body of Trades' Unionists in England. The taint is deadly, but local; and the plague-spot admits of being cut out.

The position of working men, in the second place, in relation to their employers, to each other, and to the public in general, is, in our time, peculiar. It has not yet, so to speak, attained to stable equilibrium. The feudal organisation of labour, of which so warmly coloured and taking a picture has been painted by Mr. Froude in the first volume of his history, was long since broken up. To unite and to organise to the limit of his natural capacity, which will also be the limit of his natural right, is practically a necessity for man. The break-up of the trade organisation of the middle ages was not the obliteration of a principle of human nature, but the abandonment of one form in which that principle had been embodied. Government, however, neither furnished working men with a substitute for the feudal organisation of labour, nor permitted them, for a century or two, to provide by combination a substitute for themselves. Only a few years, comparatively speaking, have elapsed since the right of union was conceded them. It was not likely that they would acquire, in a day or in a year, the capacity to use, beneficially to themselves and to the community, the new and important power which was put into their hands. The self-organisation of labour might well occupy the half, or even the whole, of a century. Errors were sure to be committed by the workmen in the process; and one error clearly inevitable was the exaggeration of the right of the class to lord it over the individual. This error, in its milder but yet pernicious

phase, led to the prohibition of piece-work and the prescription of uniform wages for work of varying quality. This error, in its extreme and atrocious development, was rattening. No energy of repression could be too great in grappling with an error which had brought forth so ghastly a progeny of crime; but there is no reason to doubt that the self-organisation of labour in England will gradually be accomplished in accordance with the laws of justice and expediency.

The population of England, in the third place, has within the last half-century increased in a ratio unprecedented in our history. Gaining new powers by which to draw from the earth its products and utilise them for the benefit of man, we have been able to feed and clothe about three times as many persons as dwelt in England in the earlier part of the century. This was a direct effect, and must therefore constitute an infallible proof, of material prosperity; but the larger a class is, the less ought we to be surprised at the occurrence within it of exceptional instances of insubordination. There has been nothing in the recent proceedings of any portion of the working class so alarming, from the national point of view, as in those of the Rebeccaites and the physical-force Chartists, whose mischievous absurdities have left no dint on England's helm.

The increase of population is, I have said, a token of material prosperity. With more strict scientific accuracy I should call it a sign that food and clothing of one kind or another have been abundant. But it is possible that an increase in mere numbers has been accompanied with, or even occasioned by, a descent on the part of the people in respect to the worthier attributes of humanity, and an accommodation of themselves to lower conditions of existence. Of this kind was doubtless the numerical increase of the Irish during many years preceding the occurrence of the potato blight. Heedless of the future so long as his rudest animal wants were supplied, the Irish peasant thought only of planting and reaping his potato crop; and when the crop failed, his resources were at an end. It is beyond question that the manufacturing and mechanical population of England, among which the increase in numbers has principally, if not exclusively, taken place, have not learned to content themselves with a lower standard of living, but, on the contrary, have steadily raised their conceptions of the comfort, and even the luxury, they ought to enjoy. In some agricultural districts the life of the peasantry, even when all the compensations of their lot are taken into account, is hard. But there are no English counties in our day, as there were in the days of Harrison, where the poor are forced, in times of high prices, to put up with bread made of rye, barley, or a mixture of peas, beans, and oats, "and some acorns among." The experience of the cotton dearth in Lancashire proved that starvation does not tread close upon the heels of scarcity in the England of our time; and a number of phenomena, among which, probably, the most important

is the success of Co-operative Societies, demonstrate that in mental power, self-command, and other qualities which raise a man out of that lowest stratum of humanity on which the demagogue acts most successfully, the workmen of England have made a great advance.

Our spinning-jennies, steam-engines, and blast-furnaces having given us an immense population, it is well for us to recollect that the augmented numbers must be fed. In this connection, the wisdom of our commercial legislation during the last twenty years is conspicuous. Great Britain has been placed in a position of greatest possible advantage relatively to other countries. England is the mart of the world. In our free-trade legislation is embodied a larger and nobler policy than that which Bacon dared to embody in the fundamental statutes on which was reared the legislation of the New Atlantis. Liberal to the measure of romance and extravagance, if tried by the standards of that age, as the administration of Bacon's ideal commonwealth may have been, the principle of exclusion lay deep in its constitution. The legislators of the New Atlantis were desirous to learn from all the world; they were willing also to communicate of their own knowledge to all the world; but they did not venture to hold intercourse with all the world. England has no fund set apart, as the men of the New Atlantis had, for the entertainment of strangers; but she shares with strangers all she has; and her merchants are Greek, Hebrew, German, American. When the harvest of England falls short, every wheat-grower from Suez to Chicago prepares to ship for the English market; we consequently know not the sudden and fierce extremes of famine and of plenty which were familiar to our fathers; and the native stock of the population is recruited by new blood from the most brilliant-witted, patient-thoughted, and tenaciously vital races of the planet.

But if we ought to take the light with the shadow, it is never safe or permissible to forget that shadow goes with the light. Certain of the conditions under which labour is carried on in our manufacturing and mining districts are incompatible with health of body or of soul. All things in this strangely complicated, mysteriously influenced life of ours hold together. Man and his world are adapted to each other; and those beautiful old legends about *Æolian* harps and sphere melodies were adumbrations of the scientific truth, that man is mysteriously influenced by nature. There is a connection, an actual, literal connection, spiritual and corporeal, between blue sky and cheerfulness of heart, between crimson clouds and generous feelings, between dewy flowers and gracious kindness, between exercise of limb and lung on green or heathy knolls and manly frankness and courage; and between the absence of all these things and sunken degradation of soul. On more than one occasion within the last few years has the general mind of England been struck with horror and amazement at the exhibition, in the mining districts, of a deadness of feeling, a

cowardly self-love, a stolid cruel apathy, as of the idiot or the brute, such as had from of old been deemed impossible in Englishmen. The people of a village,—not one or two, but scores or hundreds of them,—are aware for hours that a man is beating his wife to death, but no one interferes, and the woman is killed. Again, two men pass along the highway while a man is murdering a woman. She shrieks to them for help. They hear her; but they do not stop; and after being fiendishly beaten, she is thrown into a deep hole with water in it, and drowned. In these instances there is a Cainish sordidness and callousness of soul,—“are we our sister’s keeper?” “it’s not our business,” “we should get into trouble if we interfered,”—which one would hope to be beneath the common level of humanity. Those bestial men lived in a sunless atmosphere; from morning to night their feet were upon earth chequered by the play of no sunbeams, freshened by no tender gleam of grass or flowers; when the foot of day touched the mountain-tops, they slunk into the pit, and only when the shadow of the night was creeping over the world did they, like evil things, emerge. Living in the darkness, they became children of darkness; the colours of humanity were blanchd out of their souls; and the horrible, corpse-like whiteness of moral death-in-life remained.

Such things there are in our sunny England; but the horror and indignation they excite in the breasts of Englishmen,—the importunate, passionate desire they awaken within us to have them eternally put behind us and improved from the face of the world,—are equally characteristic of our civilisation. The cry of mining and manufacturing England for more light and air has not gone up in vain. The men who, through the industry of the people, have become princes in the land, have responded to it with princely munificence, and our Crossleys, Baxters, and a company of like-minded men with them, have “built themselves an everlasting name” by those splendid donations of parks in the neighbourhood of great cities, in which the worker may brace his weary limbs, inhale pure air, and glad his eyes with the light of flowers.

There is a reserve of force amongst us capable of bearing upon our social ills, of which our despairing censors fail to take due account. So fixedly do they gaze into the black pool of our miseries and crimes, that they mark not the silent, pauseless, mighty enginery by which the sun above their heads is slowly but surely drawing it up. Our woe and wickedness we share with other ages; that spirit of kindness which is so potent in these days we may call our own. The Parliament of England passing a special act by which a man who had committed a heinous and dangerous crime was boiled alive; Cranmer lightly stating in the corner of a letter, as a little bit of news which might as well be mentioned, that he had left a man to go to the fire for heresy; these at least are phenomena which have become im-

possible in England. We cannot even conceive the hardness and cruelty of the olden time; and there are tens of thousands in all quarters with whom it is a necessity of existence, a necessity without the satisfaction of which the pain of living would be intolerable, to do what they can to mitigate the evils which surround them.

Consider how much there is in that one word, sympathy, viewed as descriptive of a characteristic of our time in contrast with other ages. Is not sympathy almost entirely a child of these last days, and is there any quality, any influence, short of the special inspiration of the Divine Spirit, more blessed than sympathy? "O sympathy!" one could almost exclaim with a living writer, "thou of the gentle tread, and the tender hand, and the kind, thought-lighted brow, methinks, if I could envy the poet his lyre, it would be to chant thy praises! Thou art the angel of mercy, that openest the eyes, and tunest the tongue, and, with thy silent, delicate ministry, healest the heart. Thou revealest secrets, and makest the face of a brother the mirror in which a man may see his own. Thou art the central chord around which the music of humanity ranges itself. All discords thou reducest to harmony. The stone falls from the hand, the dark, knitted brow smooths down, as the Saviour's appeal,—'He that is without sin among you?'—is conducted by thee to the heart. Thou touchest the face of the bigot, and its hard, harsh lines melt and glow in the light of merciful intelligence. There is not a woe thou canst not alleviate; not a joy thou canst not augment; not a perception thou canst not clear; not a faculty thou canst not invigorate; not a good quality thou canst not temper and ennoble: thou fillest the well-springs of life. Loosed by thy delicate finger, the bandage falls from the eye of Justice, and though that eye may glisten with a tear, she sees by it how to hold the balances and to adjust the scales infinitely better than when she was blind. Thou art the woman in the household of the soul, helpmate to the intellect, ally and guardian of all that is good." This is perhaps rather high-flown and prose-poetical, but at bottom it is not inconsistent with fact; and I do not think it would be easy to exaggerate the advantage which the present possesses over bygone ages in respect of sympathy. Stern and cold as the typical character of the English is understood to be, there must be in it a vein of the finest sympathetic tenderness, homely yet delicate, simple, beautiful, and true. England has produced no Raphael or Titian; but what European artist has painted a child like Reynolds, or a lady like Gainsborough? It is difficult to imagine that the gentleness which has increased in all civilised countries in recent times, and conspicuously increased in England, is not a real advance upon the hardness of our ancestors. That enthusiasm of humanity, that passion for well-doing, that modern chivalry, with the ministering hand for the levelled spear and the dew of sympathy for the lightnings of defiance, which now carries on a universal crusade against

suffering and wrong, may be trusted to do somewhat to better the lot of mankind.

One thing clearly indisputable is, that we occupy a position of unprecedented advantage in respect of machinery accumulated and knowledge obtained. With our mechanical, chemical, agricultural science, we can make more of this "neat little farm, the earth," than was practicable for any former generation. We have surveyed the patrimonial acres, and know what they will bear. From Erebus to Hecla, nothing has escaped us. Aided by our Cuviers, our Humboldts, our Lyells, we can fix with something like precision the number of men that can be maintained upon the planet. A reasonable computation is that, if the habitable earth were utilised to the extent to which modern science renders it utilisable, it could support twelve times its present number of human tenants. The army of mankind has but begun, for example, to take possession of its domain in the western hemisphere, north and south. Millions on millions of wheat-bearing, beef-bearing, wool-bearing acres in North and South America have to be rescued from the bison and the jaguar, the ape, the puma, and the snake. Escaped from the camp of the human host, announcing its approach, myriads of wild horses, wild cattle, wild dogs, roam the prairie and the pampa, to be shut in, one day, by the mountain and the ocean, and brought back into subjection. If the human being is becoming superfluous in Europe, in other lands he is still at a premium; and by bold enterprise and wise organisation, it is surely possible that he may be brought where he is wanted. If you consider man well, you will find that what is of all things most conducive to his health and prosperity is action; and it is too soon to speak hopelessly of human progress while the planet presents fields for exertion practically illimitable.

All ages are ages of transition; for man is essentially the child of progress, and from the days of flint hatchets to those of electric telegraphs has been going on; but of the present time we may say, with special emphasis, that it is characterised by transition. A recluse here and there, who, contriving to anchor his boat in some quiet creek apart from the main current of tendency, has dozed while the mighty stream was hurrying on; a man of action, absorbed in practical enterprises, and unable to realise the velocity of the tide which has swept himself and all else along with it; these may dream that it is with us as it was, say, three centuries ago, when society took its modern form after the great religious revolution which broke up feudalism in the west of Europe. But surely this is a mistake. Except in the very roots of his moral and intellectual being, man is changed. His,—the civilised, the educated man's,—conception of the universe around him is so entirely different from that which was formerly entertained, that a modification of the whole structure and framework of his thought has become inevitable. His little dwelling,

with its day-lamp, the sun, and its night-lamp, the moon, and its star-openings in the pavement of heaven, has expanded into the infinite blue of immensity. His few thousand years of human life and terrestrial geography have deepened back into the dateless ages of geology. Mainly through the influence, direct or indirect, of scientific pursuits, inquiry in all departments,—historical, critical, philosophic,—has become at once more searching and more definite than heretofore. The whole intellectual atmosphere has been clearing up. Vague wonder, vague fear, vague expectation, have been passing away, and while the grandeur and mystery of nature have been heightened and deepened, the fantastic splendours and superstitious terrors with which she was formerly invested have been vanishing away. Huge cataclysms, worlds seething between fierce heat of internal fire and canopy of steaming vapour, have given place to a calmer idea of the process of creation, and the present is seen stretching, in variety of phenomena, but sublime unity of law, into the vistas of the past. Imagination is sternly denied the legendary and fanciful materials out of which she used to delight to rear her dream-fabrics, but in exchange for the fleeting illusions of intellectual childhood she receives the fadeless magnificence of truth. Astrology, with its pompous jargon, is no more, but in its stead we have the unveiling of heaven, in vision after vision of ineffable glory, by astronomy; no alchemist or magician now arranges his retorts or gathers his simples with a view to converting lead into gold, or discovering the elixir of life; but the chemist tells us of the secret powers and properties of nature, and the geologist points us to the rocks of the earth in which lie veins of gold. Even spirit-rapping apes the language of science, and claims, not in vain, for imbecility and imposture, that candid investigation which, in good time, snuffs them out.

Change of this kind, pervading every province of intellectual exertion, is no mere restless vacillation. Let the cynic say that we are being made like a wheel;—it is a wheel which is not merely revolving on its pivot, but going forward. That there is in the present time much of that "raw haste" which is "half-sister to delay," may be true, but there is hardly more than enough to balance that ill-starred union of torpor and timidity which calls itself wisdom and conservatism, and is the dry-rot of civilisation.

Of our political position and prospects, also, shall I venture to speak a hopeful word? Fenianism, mob-procossioning, sacrifice, or apparent sacrifice, of political consistency, if not for the sake of office, at least for the sake of getting over a difficulty, are ugly phenomena. But is it not possible that Fenianism, as it is the worst and most absurd of the political agitations which have desolated Ireland, may prove one of the last? Its rabid excesses during the last eighteen months have clearly been connected with the conclusion of the American war, and the consequent disengagement, to the

annoyance and detriment of the British nation, of a number of the most reckless scoundrels and most vehement blockheads of the species. Except as part of that venomous disaffection, that blind and furious exasperation, which in all European countries constitutes a fire-stratum, happily very thin, but requiring to be constantly watched, beneath the surface of our civilisation, Fenianism has probably all but played itself out.

As for the political morality of a Tory Government passing a Reform Bill founded on household rating suffrage, we are too near the event, with its startling vicissitude and its passionate strife, to hold the balance straight in weighing the motives of the actors. The mere fact, however, that the vindication of the Government, if practicable, must depend upon complicated and difficult reasonings, with nice consideration of times and circumstances, and ample allowance for human frailty and the requirements of expediency, is to be regretted. If the history of a political party can pledge it to anything whatever, the Conservative party in England was pledged to resist, if proposed by others, and still more to decline bringing forward on its own account, a Reform Bill embracing a large extension of the suffrage. It has a sophisticating effect upon the public mind, an effect alien to the simplicity and decision which ought to rule the moral impulses of a nation, when the conduct of statesmen requires to be elaborately vindicated. It is an unquestionable fact, weep over it or smile over it as we may, that the temper of Parliament is not favourable to a high sense of honour and a keen and sensitive conscientiousness. It was remarked that when Macaulay, always conscious of making history, talked of elevated sentiments and the loftiest political virtue, his fellow-members used to have a faint, underhand suspicion, owing to the depravity of their hearts, that there was in him a trace of the pedant and the prig; and the jesting, gyrating, easy-minded Palmerston, or the rollicking Disraeli, is far more readily obeyed in St. Stephen's than the scrupulous, proud, and irascible Gladstone. More consoling is it to recollect that in Mr. Lowe, Lord Cranborne, and one or two others, the country beheld, during the Reform session, and appreciated, an unswerving and intrepid consistency. It will, I think, be admitted also by any one who has been a careful observer during the last twenty years, that the character of parliamentary eloquence has, on the whole, changed for the better. The flashy, rhetorical ingredients have been more and more thrown out. Dishonest commonplaces about the patriotism and intelligence of working men became rarer in proportion as a just regard to their claims, and an unaffected desire to give them a voice in the national affairs, were exhibited. Not only in the great speeches of Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Lowe, but in careful efforts by much younger politicians,—Mr. Grant Duff, for example, and Lord Cranborne,—you have a selectness of language, a compact

vigour of thought, a comprehensiveness and accuracy of information, such as politicians used to reserve for the articles they contributed to Reviews, and which are new in the parliamentary eloquence of the century.

Better still, in the way of political augury, is the rise, both within and without the walls of St. Stephen's, of a spirit of earnest practical endeavour, disposed to attach comparatively slight importance to party cries and party names, and to concentrate attention and effort upon administrative efficiency. It is still in general admitted, though one or two bold thinkers have ventured, on grounds which appear to me satisfactory, to dispute the proposition, that party government is inseparable from the working of parliamentary institutions; but it is felt by sensible men that the question whether a politician calls himself Whig, Tory, or Radical, is of less importance, as bearing upon his fitness or unfitness to occupy a place in the Government, than the question whether he is specially qualified to do some part of the nation's work, to govern India, to conduct our foreign relations, to offer a definite and judicious suggestion respecting Ireland. No doubt the ideas which prevail as to what Parliament is able to perform, and ought to perform, are vague in the extreme; but I am much mistaken if there has not been gradually deepening and intensifying in the mind of the nation a feeling that the time has come for Parliament to enter upon an industrial era. The essentially important but long and wearisome problem of rendering Parliament indisputably the voice of the nation,—the tongue whereby the British people signifies its will,—has been solved. Adjustments, more or less important, remain to be made, in connection with the general constituency; and if the national honesty, earnestness, and common-sense were all that could be wished, our legislators would think it worth while to put an end, by one strenuous effort, to electoral corruption. But, in the most debateable and laborious part of it, reform of the parliamentary machine has been got done with, and the wiser portion of the nation lifts up its head to see what work the said machine is capable of turning out. It is shrewdly suspected,—shrewdly, and I think rather sternly too,—that our colonies lack governing, and that the relation in which they stand to the mother country is preposterous; that our railways, put by Parliament in possession of stupendous powers, are not under adequate parliamentary supervision; that jobbery and the attorney interest run riot in parliamentary committees, and require bridling a good deal. Not one of those superfluous railway lines which plough up the soil of England like lashes on the back of a slave, interfering with agriculture and entailing endless distress upon shareholders, but was sanctioned by a parliamentary committee, and helped to round the paunch of many a parliamentary lawyer. If you will reflect upon the numbers of our home population, and cast a

glance over the territories on the map of the world which, with their teeming millions, own the sway of Britain, you will see that Providence has appointed for this nation not a little to do. Parliament, the elixir of the national talent and the national worth, ought to be the model and the fountain-head of all our activities, simplifying, abbreviating, and, when indispensable, supplementing our code of laws, searching out capable governors for our dependencies, superintending the execution of works of national importance which require the interposition of the national will and the national force, reducing taxation to the lowest point consistent with efficient administration and public security, disencumbering itself of all work not its own,—that is to say, of all work which naturally and normally belongs either to the individual or to associated individuals,—vigilantly repressing injustice exercised by one class upon another, and impartially securing the benefits of the constitution for all classes. Such would be the Parliament of England in its industrial era; and the spirit which animates our younger politicians is of a kind which renders the expectation of its being realised not altogether visionary.

It would be easy to write a volume on the characteristics of English literature at this moment; it is difficult to speak a few words upon the subject which will be felt to be pertinent. At a first glance one might infer that our literature is fast running to seed. Beyond all question an enormous and alarming amount of trash is in these days put into black and white in England. The natural arrangement that a complete blockhead should be quiet and not write, which seems to have been understood by our ancestors, has been totally set aside, and every booby now sports his book. Nature, it is true, asserts herself by keeping those books unread. They probably give pleasure to their producers. Accurate observers in natural history are aware that the donkey brays his loudest, not for the purpose of communicating his ideas to other donkeys, but purely with a view to making proclamation of himself, and being conscious of raising a noise. His trumpet will resound through a whole parish when he has neither quadruped nor biped in sight; and the discordant scream appears to indicate a sort of absurd crack-winded satisfaction. A similar instinct it perhaps is which instigates the corresponding human animal to proclaim himself in a book. As publishers are generally wise enough in their generation to take care that no one suffers pecuniarily for the blockhead's book except the sole man who enjoys it, there is little practical evil done, and waste paper is a useful commodity. A more dangerous symptom is the rapid decline in the quality of our wit and humour, with enormous increase in the quantity of what passes itself off as such. For my own part, I advisedly declare that nothing previously witnessed in the way of drivell seems to me to have quite come down to the level of the contributions made by the imitators of Artemus Ward to the funny

papers. There have been traces, too, of a grossness of political slander which prove that we have still among us one or two satirists of that order which has been justly said to furnish a link of connection between man and the baboon. Not more disputable is it that a large proportion of the fictitious literature of the day is mere unwholesome garbage, ministering to an appetite for morbid excitement, conveying neither instruction nor information, deadening the interest of everyday life, inflaming and contaminating the imagination, and injuring every quality of character, every capacity of intellect.

And yet I see no reason to despair of British literature. There is much jungle in the forest, but it does not kill the trees; there are many weeds in the garden, but they do not choke the flowers. A genuine vitality, an honest, unaffected force in many departments of our literature, speaks of growth, not of decadence. In historical investigation we push on with the ardour and the vigilance which all earnest minds have caught from the scientific tendency of the age. The judgments of former times have been revised; pretences and falsehoods have been exploded; we have learned the salutary, though startling, lesson that at least nine-tenths of what has passed with us for historical knowledge has been elaborate and pompous ignorance; and the way is being gradually but steadily cleared towards an approximately correct conception of the characters and the events of past times. From Hallam's "*History of the British Constitution*," on the one hand, taken as a model of temperate, exact, impartial writing, to Mr. Carlyle's "*History of the French Revolution*," on the other, viewed as an illustration of the power of genius, allied with intense and wide-ranging human sympathy, to call the men and women of the past to life around us, and show us the web of history as it is woven by their hands, how many admirable historical works and historical essays we have had within the last quarter of a century! In poetry there is not much that is extensively read, but the cause is rather that our great poets have taught us to be fastidious than that much excellent poetry is not produced. Our minor poets alone would have sufficed to make any epoch remarkable which did not possess Tennyson and the Brownings. No female poet has appeared in the world who is, on the whole, comparable with Mrs. Barrett Browning. In Tennyson's poetry we may take a legitimate pride; for it is the poetry of consummate culture, the most finished the world has seen, glorious in melody, and yet profoundly English. And if a large proportion of our fiction is rubbish, let it be said that the generation which saw for twenty years, contemporaries in fame and rivals in power, three such novelists as Thackeray, Dickens, and Lord Lytton, cannot have much to complain of in its fictitious literature. "*The Newcomes*" and "*David Copperfield*" will certainly be named among the finest examples of this species of composition in the English language, and

the line of female novelists in England is carried on by a lady who, in "Adam Bede," in "Silas Marner," in "Romola," has shown herself, to say the least, a worthy successor of Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë. In general literature I shall name only Mr. Ruskin, confessedly the first Art critic in Europe, who, if he had written between Hooker and Jeremy Taylor, and his works had come down to us alongside of theirs, would, I think, be allowed to have surpassed both in the combination of grandeur with melodiousness, and to be, on the whole, the greatest master of English prose that has yet appeared. The age is probably richer than most ages in genius, and whatever genius there is can now make itself heard. That base and pernicious literature abounds is certain, but men of taste are apt to confound with what is actually bad what may be innocuous in itself, and, relatively to certain stages of culture, positively excellent. Because you can critically appreciate Beethoven's sonatas, you need not cast looks of scorn upon the circle of village children drinking in ecstasy from the tones of a barrel-organ.

One word more,—as gentlemen say on platforms,—and I have done. Fain would I make it a word worth uttering, for its subject is the most important upon which I have yet touched. Religion, which, along with the progressive reason, gives man his distinctive position among the creatures of this world, is the most momentous fact to be considered in judging of any state of society. The history of mankind furnishes no example of a healthful or prosperous society in which religion had fallen into abeyance. The assertion is loudly and extensively made that religion has either fallen, or is rapidly falling, into abeyance in England at this hour. Intelligent men, it is alleged, whether philosophers or artisans, smile at the claims of Christianity; in continental society the emancipation of all, save women and children, from sacerdotal thralldom is complete; and in England the separation between that part of the community which is under clerical influence and that which indignantly casts it off becomes unmistakable. A Saturday Reviewer has given expression, in the following remarkable statement, to his idea of the extent to which the separation in question has already been carried:—"There is a gulf between the clerical mind and the ordinary male mind which is deep, and daily deepening. On the one side it is a pity akin to contempt, too apathetic to form itself into words; on the other, there are pious hands uplifted in meek spitefulness." We have seen what Mr. Carlyle and others say as to our religion being either a doubt, a cant, or an hypocrisy.

Let us be calm. Within the circle of a coterie one is apt to misconceive what is being done or thought in the great world. When Archdeacon Denison and a few sympathising friends come together to express their sense of the horror and iniquity of the Conscience Clause, they find their unanimity so complete, their sentiment so harmonious,

their unconsciousness of any fault or flaw in their formula so profound, that their senses are steeped in a sweet entrancing music of forgetfulness; the panorama of the present swims from before their eyes; and they fancy that they live in the merry ecclesiastical England of 1662, the ink hardly dry on the Act of Uniformity. That is a mistake; and when the zealous archdeacon goes out into the world of present things, even so far as to a Church Congress, he hears what, to use his own words, "takes his breath away." But a corresponding mistake is just as often made in the scientific or philosophical coterie. The few who are gathered together, and who speak a dialect of their own, take it for granted,—there is a pleasant sensation in so doing which facilitates the operation,—that they represent the general body of their countrymen, and, in particular, that they are accepted as guides by the overwhelming majority of intelligent and educated men. This, however, may be a delusion, and I cannot help thinking that the Saturday Reviewer mistook the impression of a coterie for a sign of the times when he said that "the ordinary male mind" of England regards the clergy with contemptuous and apathetic pity. At all events, his words have no scientific value as a statement of fact. A vast proportion of the landowners, of the merchants, of the farmers, of the tradesmen, of the working men of England, look upon the clergy with respect. They do so not without cause, for the clergy deserve to be respected. I do not name one or ten, because if I named any it would be invidious not to name hundreds, among the clergy of all denominations in England, who, if honest adherence to conviction, blameless character, benevolent life, personal refinement, and a high standard of intellectual attainment, constitute a title to respect, deserve to be respected. Between the learned professions there is naturally some jealousy. The lawyer type of mind, on the whole far lower and ignobler, is more acute than that of the clergyman, more inclined to religious scepticism, more heartless, cold, and cynical. Young lawyers are apt enough to speak and feel with contempt regarding the clergy. Medical men, too, are not unfrequently glad of an occasion "to spite the parsons." The literary and the clerical classes compete in all modern countries for the direction of public opinion; rivalry produces in mean souls,—and even men of letters can be mean,—envy and hatred; and envy and hatred are most pleasantly expressed in contempt. Scientific men have reason for accusing at least a portion of the clergy of discountenancing science, and materialists and positivists see their natural enemies in a class which stands or falls with the subsistence of faith in a spiritual world and a living God. That it is possible, therefore, to move pretty widely in cultivated circles in the metropolis without passing beyond limits within which the clergy are despised, I admit; but it is simply an error to conclude that ordinary Englishmen regard the clergy, or the Christian religion which they teach,

with contempt. Mr. Gladstone may be considered a favourable specimen of the ordinary, or even of the extraordinary "male mind" of England, and his critique on "*Ecce Homo*" is not the work of a man who turns in apathetic scorn from all that the clergy of England are and represent.

The lay mind of the country, let enthusiastic sceptics say what they will, has not learned to look upon the historical facts with which the Christian religion is bound up, as Cicero and Cæsar looked upon the tattle of the augurs; but it is, I think, absolutely certain that the lay mind of England will accept those truths respecting the physical world upon which scientific authorities are agreed, and those conclusions respecting the documents in which the Christian religion is embodied on which scholars are unanimous. It is absolutely certain, also, that these scientific truths and philological conclusions differ in important points from the conceptions entertained regarding them by the divines and scholars who drew up the confessions of the various Protestant Churches. Englishmen feel themselves bound, not merely by their national character for integrity, frankness, and courage, but by their Protestantism itself, to face every statement which is true, and to face it with a welcoming smile. That clearing process which has been applied to all our knowledge must be applied to our religion. It must divest itself of every tag of superstition; and it will, we may pretty confidently infer, be in the future less ecclesiastical and less dogmatic than it has been in the past. But there is no reason to apprehend that we are passing into the Chinese phase of civilisation, or that the grandeur which envelopes human affairs when heaven's light falls upon them is to be no more seen in England. Christianity, the most spiritual of religions, presents no parallel to the religions of classic antiquity; it affords scope to all that is noble, great, beautiful in man; it is the religion of conscience and of the affections; its harmony with what is divine in humanity is so profound, that the circumstance has been taken advantage of to represent it as a mere elaboration of natural religion. The deliberate testimony of the wisest of the moderns, Goethe, was given to the effect that man cannot recede from the point to which he has attained in Christianity. That a religion which, in its body of spiritual truth, offers a comprehensive and benign response to all that is deepest in human nature, under what theory soever man is viewed, should be undermined by the discovery of new facts relating either to the formation of the world or man's place in the animal creation, is out of the question; and the historical evidence touching the fundamental facts of the Christian revelation stands at this moment on a basis which scholars taking rank with any in Europe hold to be impregnable.

P. B.

ON MATRIMONY.

MY DEARS,—I am an old maid ; I will not disguise the fact, although I am not one of those enraged old maids who pretend to glory in their triumphant escape from the ignoble slavery of wedlock. Without any intention of wearying you with querulous lamentations on my own account, I confess once for all that I believe double is better than single blessedness ; and that if I had practised in my youth the wisdom I am about to preach in my old age, I might have been happier as a wife than as a spinster, and should perhaps have addressed you young people with more authority in the character of grandmother, than in that of great-aunt. But as happiness is undemonstrative, and poets “ learn in suffering what they teach in song ; ” as the bankrupt trader ripens, by the frost of his discontent, into a political economist, while the merchant prince has no temptation to divulge the simple secret of his wealth ; as the mariner who sails into the haven with all his cargo sound and dry, enriches the admiralty charts with no new coral-reef ; it is left for those who in their own lives have been unlucky, to brood over the causes of failure and point out to others the avenues of success.

When I class myself with the unlucky, I do not mean to reproach fortune as being niggardly with her gifts, but to regret my own want of discretion in the application of the advantages which fortune bestowed on me with more liberality than I deserved. I was neither ill born, plain, portionless, nor stupid. It was my own fault that my abilities were devoted rather to the display of my own cleverness than the acquisition of other people’s knowledge ; and that I calculated on my social position and worldly wealth as stepping-stones to a higher level than they practically availed to reach. The judicious reader will believe as much, or as little, as he or she pleases of an old lady’s report of her own long-faded charms ; but I believe it was from some fault in my disposition rather than in my outward woman, that I was considered rather striking and graceful at first sight than attractive on further acquaintance.

I do not believe that I was incapable of loving, though I was once told so, more in sorrow than in anger, by one of my admirers to whom I certainly behaved very ill. He was then a barrister, scarcely advanced enough in his profession to be called a rising barrister, but already known to be a man likely to rise ; a man of solid and vigorous ability, of determined industry—square-headed, square-shouldered, deep-eyed and deep-chested. I had a certain respect for

His character and liked him. Unfortunately, though he was rather above the middle height, his large head and shoulders and large hands and feet prevented him from looking like a hero of romance. I liked him, not wisely because of his own merits, but foolishly because one of his few weaknesses was a great admiration of myself. His conversation was shrewd, pithy, and sometimes had a homely terse eloquence when he was roused and spoke with feeling. There was a mica sparkle of humour in this solid granite man, but he was not brilliant or witty, as he professed to think me. Indeed he talked to me less than I talked to him, and it was pleasant to talk to him. Besides, as everybody said he was so sensible, and as my father, who was chairman of quarter sessions, said he had a "judicial mind," his admiration flattered me. I am not going to relate the circumstances of that prosaic and commonplace story. After a certain number of circuits and assize balls,—he did not dance well and had better not have danced at all,—he said he had laid sufficient hold on the skirts of the law to venture. In short, he asked me to be his wife, and I would not take him. There was a certain honourable captain in the Guards who had lately come down to stand for our nearest borough,—a very ornamental, fashionable and accomplished captain, who paid a certain amount of attention to me while he wanted my father's influence in the borough. Perhaps he was in earnest till he found that my fortune was only ten thousand pounds and my father's estate entailed on my cousin Richard. I could tell you a pretty history about the captain, if my object were to amuse you instead of instructing you. I would have married the captain if he had asked me, as I expected he would in the flush of triumph after we had helped him to win his contest. How beautifully he spoke, how gracefully he interspersed his serious oratory with ready badinage and repartee when the mob interrupted him! I thought he would make such a figure in Parliament, and he looked so much like a hero of romance! But he came to no good, gambled, and ran away with somebody else's wife, and drank, and died abroad in debt and dishonour. And I was only waiting for him to ask me, when I refused that honest and manly heart which was mine! After all, when I look back upon it, I went nearer loving the rough lawyer, than the smooth soldier. And how sorry I was for him! I am sorry for myself now. He is a judge and a peer of the realm. I wonder if he ever reads magazine articles. I am too old and wrinkled to blush at the thought of his reading this public avowal of my regret. It is not for him or any other good judges I write, but to caution young ladies against the errors of average young ladyhood. If you wish to get a husband, my dear, and one who will really suit you, do not set up a false ideal of yourself, for an idol of idiotic adoration, and then evolve from your inner consciousness, or from the descriptions of female novelists, an impossible hero, who shall sympathise with all your vanities and merge all your vexations of spirit

in a vortex of inconceivable rapture; but set yourself betimes to study mankind, and to educate your mind by frank and honest communication with the fellow-creatures providence sends in your way.

A young lady has much to learn, of which she comes out of the school-room quite ignorant, and which she cannot pick up in the library. She has not many years to learn it in, before she ceases to be a young lady. But though she must lose no time, the beginning of her wisdom is to learn that the greatest of all waste of time is hurry. Impatience is the robber of time, whereas procrastination, as we know by the copy-books, is a mild and gentle thing, whose petty larcenies are accompanied by no violence. Impatience is always rushing headlong into tangled and thorny thickets to explore some promising and picturesque short cut to nowhere. Impatience is always on the point of finding a fool's paradise in a mare's nest. Impatience goes on, from failure to failure, attempting to make silk purses out of sows' ears. Impatience keeps tossing over new acquaintances in a perpetually disappointed rapture of anticipation of ideal perfection;—like some insane bee buzzing about in search of a flower which should be entirely constructed of white wax and clarified honey.

A girl who comes out at seventeen, let her be ever so highly gifted by nature, or ever so highly finished by her governesses, must necessarily be profoundly ignorant of men and of the things which interest the minds of men,—especially of those men who are of an age at which the average male population begin to think of marrying. She will be unwise if she dedicates herself to exceptional rather than to ordinary instances of mankind. There are, no doubt, a certain number of heirs-apparent of rich men, who might marry young if they happened to fall very much in love, which is seldom the case, but who usually lead a vagrant and miscellaneous life of flirtation for some years, and eventually marry an heiress, or a beauty, or a duke's daughter;—somebody, that is, as exceptional as themselves.

If you are, as I believe, merely a nice young lady, with a nice figure, expressive eyes, plenty of hair on your head,—and I hope you dress it simply and neatly, without fuzzy wisps of horsehair or disingenuous chignons, or a nasty trailing ringlet down your nape, all which will tell against your success with the better samples of marrying men,—why should you augur to yourself any very special or exceptional good luck in the matrimonial chances of life, if you are foolish enough to consider it good luck to link your destiny in life with a young man chosen with a view to prospective thousands a year, or acres in a ring-fence, and who will very likely be tired of you before he comes into possession?

But if you seriously and betimes devote yourself to the study proper to womankind, and pursue it with good sense and modesty, you will have the same fair average certainty of success which is

guaranteed by the world's experience to any honest, sensible, and industrious man, in any honourable calling which he adopts.

And now we come to the question, "What is the study proper to womankind?" I am not prepared to take what is called high ground. I have said I consider double blessedness better than single; but blessedness of any sort is better than the double wretchedness of being the companion for life of a man who is unsuitable to you, or to whom you are unsuitable. Your proper study is to make yourself the best possible wife for your best possible husband, by educating your soul and mind and body to the best of your abilities. If you have not the good fortune to find a man whom you can love, respect, comfort, and be useful to, you will, at the worst, have put yourself in the way of being a more amiable, respectable, and comfortable old maid than you would be if you neglected so to educate yourself.

There are two main and typical methods in which "*Cœlebs*' wives set out in quest of lovers," which differ, *toto cœlo*, as well as *toto cœlebi*. The first method, the one to avoid, is the way to catch a fool;—and, failing that happy result, to be a superannuated flirt, than which there is, probably, no more miserable and contemptible position on the face of the earth. It is done by concealing your ignorance instead of replacing it by knowledge; by arraying yourself in the smiles of flattery and the languishing airs and graces of a susceptibility too ready and too general to be quite modest; and by playing over and over again to a succession of heroes silly enough to play the fool with you, the stale and weary part of the *jeune ingenue*, with gushing emotions and impulsive affections. The disadvantage of this performance is, that it is only pretty and interesting once in a lifetime,—and that once at a rather tender age. It degenerates by repetition. Your Juliet is a poor part for a long run on the boards of real life. All the world cannot be your Romeo at once, and only fools, or worse, will consent to be Romeos by rotation. It educates you to nothing;—if it does not degrade you to something worse than nothing. It sinks you slowly in your own esteem, and very rapidly in everybody else's. It creates in you a morbid want of admiration from the other sex, which, as it ebbs away from you, you will be tempted to lay yourself out for with less and less of maiden reserve; or, not to mince the matter, with more and more of brazen effrontery. In short, this is the way not to do it.

And now for the way to do it. The secret is very simple, but its application is as wide as truth. You must as much as in you lies strive to suppress your natural desire of making yourself an object of interest to others, and overlay this propensity with the faculty and the habit of taking a real interest in the thoughts and characters and experiences of your fellow-creatures. Egotism is the great canker of humanity; and its blight is more fatal to the blossom than the fruit, because it nips so many human characters in the bud that never come to any fruit worth mentioning at all. If you master this great

incubus of self early in life, you will walk through life like an unburdened free man, with a straight back and unembarrassed hands among troops of bondsmen bent double under heavy packs. I am not preaching Christianity, but worldly wisdom. You will win love wholesale from man, woman, and child by lending a willing hand's turn when occasion offers to help them with their bundles, which they will confide to you all the more readily when they find you are not in the habit of troubling them with yours in return.

There is something to learn from every human being with whom you come in contact. Make it your study to find what special knowledge, what generous sentiment, what noble aspiration there may be in the next person with whom you become acquainted. Tolerate this person's faults, repress your impulse to obstruct his egotism by the display of your own abilities; pass by opinions you could vigorously and perhaps successfully combat; wait till you can respond to something with which you cordially sympathise. Many a character which seems unsympathetic and unpromising at first, thaws in the absence of opposition, and in the presence of sympathy. I am not recommending a hypocritical pretence of interest in really uninteresting persons, nor a cowardly dissimulation of your opinions when your opinions are really called for. I am trying to impress upon you the great worldly value of that sovereign grace of charity which "hopeth all things, thinketh no evil, vaunteth not itself." When you have succeeded in a few crucial experiments of extracting useful knowledge and human interest out of persons whom, without this effort, you might have voted dull and disagreeable, you will find how much an analogous method of treatment will enhance the pleasure you derive from those whom, without any effort of self-suppression at all, you would have found clever and agreeable.

Let us suppose you are seated at a dinner-party next to a man who, without being deficient in such lively small talk as will keep an average commonplace young lady in pretty brisk conversation, you know to be of good capacity and well informed. The conversation glances on some topic of serious interest, on which you feel yourself to be so ignorant that you cannot venture to discuss it on equal terms without a moral certainty of floundering out of your depth. There are three courses for you to pursue. If you are absolutely foolish, you will express some borrowed opinion, some crude formula of commonplace and stale wisdom, the best you have in your limited armoury, in opposition to the view hinted at, and allow yourself to be drawn into a pert, superficial mock argument, in which your neighbour may amuse himself by drawing out your self-sufficient imbecility to the utmost;—after which you will neither of you like one another the better. If you are half wise, you will slip out of the danger by some not too violent piece of colloquial legerdemain, giving the go-by to the topic. But if you are really wise, you will take the

opportunity of putting a modest and intelligent question, which will show that you are neither too vain nor too stupid to desire to learn. Do not be afraid of being troublesome. No capable and instructed man finds it wearisome to communicate facts or theories which he has at the tip of his tongue to a nice young lady who takes an interest in listening to him.

Do not pretend, with a puzzled attempt at a perspicacious expression of countenance, to comprehend admirably an exposition which flies miles over your head. At all hazards learn something. Your friend will, at least, admire your candour, modesty, and courage, and appreciate your desire to learn. Every blank you fill will make it easier to you to take an interest in higher ranges of conversation, and fit you more and more for the society of higher classes of intelligence. The power of taking interest implies the gift of awakening interest. All progress is interesting. There are country gentlemen who can take an interest in looking over a gate day by day to observe the growth of turnips; that is but a low form of progress. A teachable child is more interesting than many turnip-fields, and a teachable woman, with bright eyes, who "improves each shining hour," not only has many chances in the year of finding a sensible husband, but has many years to do it in. She grows old so much more slowly than the flirt; her mind brightens as her complexion fades. Indeed, the power of mind over matter will go further than this. I have known girls who were positively plain at twenty grow comparatively good-looking at thirty;—but then they had been making themselves agreeable in the very best fashion all their lives. I have in my memory especially one dear contemporary of mine, whom I had the wit to love and value though not the wisdom to imitate. She was almost ugly in her youth; moreover, she was shy and awkward. She had a painful consciousness of her plainness, which she got over as she ceased to think or care about her looks. For Nature had gifted her with a mind and heart as beautiful as her features were plain. By the time that I was become rather an angular old maid, her inward woman had so got the better of her outward that she was really an attractive woman; and I have heard an eminent painter say of her that her face was almost the loveliest he had seen. She married a man of considerable distinction when she was near forty, and I am convinced that they were as "happy ever afterwards" as any prince and princess in a fairy tale. Hundreds of people loved her;—men and women as well. Women did not resent her popularity with men, for it was an attraction perfectly clear of all personal vanity and conscious flattery. She was as modest as Burns's "daisy." I never saw her "make an eye" in my life. I believe firmly that she enjoyed more happiness in one of her least happy years than I did in ten of my best. But she deserved happiness, and I didn't. My dear, I hope you will follow her example and not mine. She was a wise virgin and I was a silly flirt.

PHINEAS FINN, THE IRISH MEMBER.

CHAPTER XX.

THE DEBATE ON THE BALLOT.

PHINEAS took his seat in the House with a consciousness of much inward trepidation of heart on that night of the ballot debate. After leaving Lord Chiltern he went down to his club and dined alone. Three or four men came and spoke to him; but he could not talk to them at his ease, nor did he quite know what they were saying to him. He was going to do something which he longed to achieve, but the very idea of which, now that it was so near to him, was a terror to him. To be in the House and not to speak would, to his thinking, be a disgraceful failure. Indeed, he could not continue to keep his seat unless he spoke. He had been put there that he might speak. He would speak. Of course he would speak. Had he not already been conspicuous almost as a boy orator? And yet, at this moment he did not know whether he was eating mutton or beef, or who was standing opposite to him and talking to him, so much was he in dread of the ordeal which he had prepared for himself. As he went down to the House after dinner, he almost made up his mind that it would be a good thing to leave London by one of the night mail trains. He felt himself to be stiff and stilted as he walked, and that his clothes were uneasy to him. When he turned into Westminster Hall he regretted more keenly than ever he had done that he had seceded from the keeping of Mr. Low. He could, he thought, have spoken very well in court, and would there have learned that self-confidence which now failed him so terribly. It was, however, too late to think of that. He could only go in and take his seat.

He went in and took his seat, and the chamber seemed to him to be mysteriously large, as though benches were crowded over benches, and galleries over galleries. He had been long enough in the House to have lost the original awe inspired by the Speaker and the clerks of the House, by the row of Ministers, and by the unequalled importance of the place. On ordinary occasions he could saunter in and out, and whisper at his ease to a neighbour. But on this occasion he went direct to the bench on which he ordinarily sat, and began at once to rehearse to himself his speech. He had in truth been doing this all day, in spite of the effort that he had made to rid himself of all memory of the occasion. He had been collecting the heads of his speech while Mr. Low had been talking to him, and refreshing

his quotations in the presence of Lord Chiltern and the dumb-bells. He had taxed his memory and his intellect with various tasks, which, as he feared, would not adjust themselves one with another. He had learned the headings of his speech,—so that one heading might follow the other, and nothing be forgotten. And he had learned verbatim the words which he intended to utter under each heading,—with a hope that if any one compact part should be destroyed or injured in its compactness by treachery of memory, or by the course of the debate, each other compact part might be there in its entirety, ready for use ;—or at least so many of the compact parts as treachery of memory and the accidents of the debate might leave to him ; so that his speech might be like a vessel, watertight in its various compartments, that would float by the buoyancy of its stern and bow, even though the hold should be waterlogged. But this use of his composed words, even though he should be able to carry it through, would not complete his work ;—for it would be his duty to answer in some sort those who had gone before him, and in order to do this he must be able to insert, without any pre-arrangement of words or ideas, little intercalatory parts between those compact masses of argument with which he had been occupying himself for many laborious hours. As he looked round upon the House and perceived that everything was dim before him, that all his original awe of the House had returned, and with it a present quaking fear that made him feel the pulsations of his own heart, he became painfully aware that the task he had prepared for himself was too great. He should, on this the occasion of his rising to his maiden legs, have either prepared for himself a short general speech, which could indeed have done little for his credit in the House, but which might have served to carry off the novelty of the thing, and have introduced him to the sound of his own voice within those walls,—or he should have trusted to what his wit and spirit would produce for him on the spur of the moment, and not have burdened himself with a huge exercise of memory. During the presentation of a few petitions he tried to repeat to himself the first of his compact parts,—a compact part on which, as it might certainly be brought into use let the debate have gone as it might, he had expended great care. He had flattered himself that there was something of real strength in his words as he repeated them to himself in the comfortable seclusion of his own room, and he had made them so ready to his tongue that he thought it to be impossible that he should forget even an intonation. Now he found that he could not remember the first phrases without unloosing and looking at a small roll of paper which he held furtively in his hand. What was the good of looking at it ? He would forget it again in the next moment. He had intended to satisfy the most eager of his friends, and to astound his opponents. As it was, no one would be satisfied,—and none astounded but they who had trusted in him.

The debate began, and if the leisure afforded by a long and tedious speech could have served him, he might have had leisure enough. He tried at first to follow all that this advocate for the ballot might say, hoping thence to acquire the impetus of strong interest; but he soon wearied of the work, and began to long that the speech might be ended, although the period of his own martyrdom would thereby be brought nearer to him. At half-past seven so many members had deserted their seats, that Phineas began to think that he might be saved all further pains by a "count out." He reckoned the members present and found that they were below the mystic forty,—first by two, then by four, by five, by seven, and at one time by eleven. It was not for him to ask the Speaker to count the House, but he wondered that no one else should do so. And yet, as the idea of this termination to the night's work came upon him, and as he thought of his lost labour, he almost took courage again,—almost dreaded rather than wished for the interference of some malicious member. But there was no malicious member then present, or else it was known that Lords of the Treasury and Lords of the Admiralty would flock in during the Speaker's ponderous counting,—and thus the slow length of the ballot-lover's verbosity was permitted to evolve itself without interruption. At eight o'clock he had completed his catalogue of illustrations, and immediately Mr. Monk rose from the Treasury bench to explain the grounds on which the Government must decline to support the motion before the House.

Phineas was aware that Mr. Monk intended to speak, and was aware also that his speech would be very short. "My idea is," he had said to Phineas, "that every man possessed of the franchise should dare to have and to express a political opinion of his own;—that otherwise the franchise is not worth having; and that men will learn that when all so dare, no evil can come from such daring. As the ballot would make any courage of that kind unnecessary, I dislike the ballot. I shall confine myself to that, and leave the illustration to younger debaters." Phineas also had been informed that Mr. Turnbull would reply to Mr. Monk, with the purpose of crushing Mr. Monk into dust, and Phineas had prepared his speech with something of an intention of subsequently crushing Mr. Turnbull. He knew, however, that he could not command his opportunity. There was the chapter of accidents to which he must accommodate himself; but such had been his programme for the evening.

Mr. Monk made his speech,—and though he was short, he was very fiery and energetic. Quick as lightning words of wrath and scorn flew from him, in which he painted the cowardice, the meanness, the falsehood of the ballot. "The ballot-box," he said, "was the grave of all true political opinion." Though he spoke hardly for ten minutes, he seemed to say more than enough, ten times enough, to slaughter the argument of the former speaker. At every hot word

as it fell, Phineas was driven to regret that a paragraph of his own was taken away from him, and that his choicest morsels of standing ground were being cut from under his feet. When Mr. Monk sat down, Phineas felt that Mr. Monk had said all that he, Phineas Finn, had intended to say.

Then Mr. Turnbull rose slowly from the bench below the gangway. With a speaker so frequent and so famous as Mr. Turnbull no hurry is necessary. He is sure to have his opportunity. The Speaker's eye is ever travelling to the accustomed spots. Mr. Turnbull rose slowly and began his oration very mildly. "There was nothing," he said, "that he admired so much as the poetic imagery and the high-flown sentiment of his right honourable friend the member for West Bromwich,"—Mr. Monk sat for West Bromwich,—“unless it were the stubborn facts and unanswered arguments of his honourable friend who had brought forward this motion.” Then Mr. Turnbull proceeded after his fashion to crush Mr. Monk. He was very prosaic, very clear both in voice and language, very harsh, and very unscrupulous. He and Mr. Monk had been joined together in politics for over twenty years;—but one would have thought, from Mr. Turnbull's words, that they had been the bitterest of enemies. Mr. Monk was taunted with his office, taunted with his desertion of the liberal party, taunted with his ambition,—and taunted with his lack of ambition. "I once thought," said Mr. Turnbull,—“nay, not long ago I thought, that he and I would have fought this battle for the people, shoulder to shoulder, and knee to knee;—but he has preferred that the knee next to his own shall wear a garter, and that the shoulder which supports him shall be decked with a blue ribbon,—as shoulders, I presume, are decked in those closet conferences which are called Cabinets.”

Just after this, while Mr. Turnbull was still going on with a variety of illustrations drawn from the United States, Barrington Erle stepped across the benches up to the place where Phineas was sitting, and whispered a few words into his ear. "Bonteen is prepared to answer Turnbull, and wishes to do it. I told him that I thought you should have the opportunity, if you wish it." Phineas was not ready with a reply to Erle at the spur of the moment. "Somebody told me," continued Erle, "that you had said that you would like to speak to-night."

"So I did," said Phineas.

"Shall I tell Bonteen that you will do it."

The chamber seemed to swim round before our hero's eyes. Mr. Turnbull was still going on with his clear, loud, unpleasant voice, but there was no knowing how long he might go on. Upon Phineas, if he should now consent, might devolve the duty, within ten minutes, within three minutes, of rising there before a full House to defend his great friend, Mr. Monk, from a gross personal attack. Was it fit that

such a novice as he should undertake such a work as that? Were he to do so, all that speech which he had prepared, with its various self-floating parts, must go for nothing. The task was exactly that which, of all tasks, he would best like to have accomplished, and to have accomplished well. But if he should fail! And he felt that he would fail. For such work a man should have all his senses about him,—his full courage, perfect confidence, something almost approaching to contempt for listening opponents, and nothing of fear in regard to listening friends. He should be as a cock in his own farmyard, master of all the circumstances around him. But Phineas Finn had not even as yet heard the sound of his own voice in that room. At this moment, so confused was he, that he did not know where sat Mr. Mildmay, and where Mr. Daubeny. All was confused, and there arose as it were a sound of waters in his ears, and a feeling as of a great hell around him. “I had rather wait,” he said at last. “Bonteen had better reply.” Barrington Erle looked into his face, and then stepping back across the benches, told Mr. Bonteen that the opportunity was his.

Mr. Turnbull continued speaking quite long enough to give poor Phineas time for repentance; but repentance was of no use. He had decided against himself, and his decision could not be reversed. He would have left the House, only it seemed to him that had he done so every one would look at him. He drew his hat down over his eyes, and remained in his place, hating Mr. Bonteen, hating Barrington Erle, hating Mr. Turnbull,—but hating no one so much as he hated himself. He had disgraced himself for ever, and could never recover the occasion which he had lost.

Mr. Bonteen’s speech was in no way remarkable. Mr. Monk, he said, had done the State good service by adding his wisdom and patriotism to the Cabinet. The sort of argument which Mr. Bonteen used to prove that a man who has gained credit as a legislator should in process of time become a member of the executive, is trite and common, and was not used by Mr. Bonteen with any special force. Mr. Bonteen was glib of tongue, and possessed that familiarity with the place which poor Phineas had lacked so sorely. There was one moment, however, which was terrible to Phineas. As soon as Mr. Bonteen had shown the purpose for which he was on his legs, Mr. Monk looked round at Phineas, as though in reproach. He had expected that this work should fall into the hands of one who would perform it with more warmth of heart than could be expected from Mr. Bonteen. When Mr. Bonteen ceased, two or three other short speeches were made, and members fired off their little guns. Phineas having lost so great an opportunity, would not now consent to accept one that should be comparatively valueless. Then there came a division. The motion was lost by a large majority,—by any number you might choose to name, as Phineas had said to Lord Brentford;

but in that there was no triumph to the poor wretch who had failed through fear, and who was now a coward in his own esteem.

He left the House alone, carefully avoiding all speech with any one. As he came out he had seen Laurence Fitzgibbon in the lobby, but he had gone on without pausing a moment, so that he might avoid his friend. And when he was out in Palace Yard, where was he to go next? He looked at his watch, and found that it was just ten. He did not dare to go to his club, and it was impossible for him to go home and to bed. He was very miserable, and nothing would comfort him but sympathy? Was there any one who would listen to his abuse of himself, and would then answer him with kindly apologies for his own weakness. Mrs. Bunce would do it if she knew how, but sympathy from Mrs. Bunce would hardly avail. There was but one person in the world to whom he could tell his own humiliation with any hope of comfort, and that person was Lady Laura Kennedy. Sympathy from any man would have been distasteful to him. He had thought for a moment of flinging himself at Mr. Monk's feet and telling all his weakness;—but he could not have endured pity even from Mr. Monk. It was not to be endured from any man.

He thought that Lady Laura Kennedy would be at home, and probably alone. He knew, at any rate, that he might be allowed to knock at her door, even at that hour. He had left Mr. Kennedy in the House, and there he would probably remain for the next hour. There was no man more constant than Mr. Kennedy in seeing the work of the day,—or of the night,—to its end. So Phineas walked up Victoria Street, and from thence into Grosvenor Place, and knocked at Lady Laura's door. "Yes; Lady Laura was at home; and alone." He was shown up into the drawing-room, and there he found Lady Laura waiting for her husband.

"So the great debate is over," she said, with as much of irony as she knew how to throw into the epithet.

"Yes; it is over."

"And what have they done,—those leviathans of the people?"

Then Phineas told her what was the majority.

"Is there anything the matter with you, Mr. Finn?" she said, looking at him suddenly. "Are you not well?"

"Yes; I am very well."

"Will you not sit down? There is something wrong, I know. What is it?"

"I have simply been the greatest idiot, the greatest coward, the most awkward ass that ever lived!"

"What do you mean?"

"I do not know why I should come to tell you of it at this hour at night, but I have come that I might tell you. Probably because there is no one else in the whole world who would not laugh at me."

"At any rate, I shall not laugh at you," said Lady Laura.

"But you will despise me."

"That I am sure I shall not do."

"You cannot help it. I despise myself. For years I have placed before myself the ambition of speaking in the House of Commons;—for years I have been thinking whether there would ever come to me an opportunity of making myself heard in that assembly, which I consider to be the first in the world. To-day the opportunity has been offered to me,—and, though the motion was nothing, the opportunity was great. The subject was one on which I was thoroughly prepared. The manner in which I was summoned was most flattering to me. I was especially called on to perform a task which was most congenial to my feelings;—and I declined because I was afraid."

"You had thought too much about it, my friend," said Lady Laura.

"Too much or too little, what does it matter?" replied Phineas, in despair. "There is the fact. I could not do it. Do you remember the story of Conachar in the 'Fair Maid of Perth';—how his heart refused to give him blood enough to fight? He had been suckled with the milk of a timid creature, and, though he could die, there was none of the strength of manhood in him. It is about the same thing with me, I take it."

"I do not think you are at all like Conachar," said Lady Laura.

"I am equally disgraced, and I must perish after the same fashion. I shall apply for the Chiltern Hundreds in a day or two."

"You will do nothing of the kind," said Lady Laura, getting up from her chair and coming towards him. "You shall not leave this room till you have promised me that you will do nothing of the kind. I do not know as yet what has occurred to-night; but I do know that that modesty which has kept you silent is more often a grace than a disgrace."

This was the kind of sympathy which he wanted. She drew her chair nearer to him, and then he explained to her as accurately as he could what had taken place in the House on this evening,—how he had prepared his speech, how he had felt that his preparation was vain, how he perceived from the course of the debate that if he spoke at all his speech must be very different from what he had first intended; how he had declined to take upon himself a task which seemed to require so close a knowledge of the ways of the House and of the temper of the men, as the defence of such a man as Mr. Monk. In accusing himself he, unconsciously, excused himself, and his excuse, in Lady Laura's ears, was more valid than his accusation.

"And you would give it all up for that?" she said.

"Yes; I think I ought."

"I have very little doubt but that you were right in allowing Mr. Bonteen to undertake such a task. I should simply explain to Mr. Monk that you felt too keen an interest in his welfare to stand up as

an untried member in his defence. It is not, I think, the work for a man who is not at home in the House. I am sure Mr. Monk will feel this, and I am quite certain that Mr. Kennedy will think that you have been right."

"I do not care what Mr. Kennedy may think."

"Why do you say that, Mr. Finn? That is not courteous."

"Simply because I care so much what Mr. Kennedy's wife may think. Your opinion is all in all to me,—only that I know you are too kind to me."

"He would not be too kind to you. He is never too kind to any one. He is justice itself."

Phineas, as he heard the tones of her voice, could not but feel that there was in Lady Laura's words something of an accusation against her husband.

"I hate justice," said Phineas. "I know that justice would condemn me. But love and friendship know nothing of justice. The value of love is that it overlooks faults, and forgives even crimes."

"I, at any rate," said Lady Laura, "will forgive the crime of your silence in the House. My strong belief in your success will not be in the least affected by what you tell me of your failure to-night. You must await another opportunity; and, if possible, you should be less anxious as to your own performance. There is Violet." As Lady Laura spoke the last words, there was a sound of a carriage stopping in the street, and the front door was immediately opened. "She is staying here, but has been dining with her uncle, Admiral Effingham." Then Violet Effingham entered the room, rolled up in pretty white furs, and silk cloaks, and lace shawls. "Here is Mr. Finn, come to tell us of the debate about the ballot."

"I don't care twopence about the ballot," said Violet, as she put out her hand to Phineas. "Are we going to have a new iron fleet built? That's the question."

"Sir Simeon has come out strong to-night," said Lady Laura.

"There is no political question of any importance except the question of the iron fleet," said Violet. "I am quite sure of that, and so, if Mr. Finn can tell me nothing about the iron fleet, I'll go to bed."

"Mr. Kennedy will tell you everything when he comes home," said Phineas.

"Oh, Mr. Kennedy! Mr. Kennedy never tells one anything. I doubt whether Mr. Kennedy thinks that any woman knows the meaning of the British Constitution."

"Do you know what it means, Violet," asked Lady Laura.

"To be sure I do. It is liberty to growl about the iron fleet, or the ballot, or the taxes, or the peers, or the bishops,—or anything else, except the House of Commons. That's the British Constitution. Good-night, Mr. Finn."

"What a beautiful creature she is!" said Phineas.

"Yes, indeed," said Lady Laura.

"And full of wit and grace and pleasantness. I do not wonder at your brother's choice."

It will be remembered that this was said on the day before Lord Chiltern had made his offer for the third time.

"Poor Oswald! he does not know as yet that she is in town."

After that Phineas went, not wishing to await the return of Mr. Kennedy. He had felt that Violet Effingham had come into the room just in time to remedy a great difficulty. He did not wish to speak of his love to a married woman,—to the wife of the man who called him friend,—to a woman who he felt sure would have rebuked him. But he could hardly have restrained himself had not Miss Effingham been there.

But as he went home he thought more of Miss Effingham than he did of Lady Laura; and I think that the voice of Miss Effingham had done almost as much towards comforting him as had the kindness of the other.

At any rate, he had been comforted.

CHAPTER XXI.

"DO BE PUNCTUAL."

On the very morning after his failure in the House of Commons, when Phineas was reading in the Telegraph,—he took the Telegraph not from choice but for economy,—the words of that debate which he had heard and in which he should have taken a part, a most unwelcome visit was paid to him. It was near eleven, and the breakfast things were still on the table. He was at this time on a Committee of the House with reference to the use of potted peas in the army and navy, at which he had sat once,—at a preliminary meeting,—and in reference to which he had already resolved that as he had failed so frightfully in debate, he would certainly do his duty to the utmost in the more easy but infinitely more tedious work of the Committee Room. The Committee met at twelve, and he intended to walk down to the Reform Club, and then to the House. He had just completed his reading of the debate and of the leaders in the Telegraph on the subject. He had told himself how little the writer of the article knew about Mr. Turnbull, how little about Mr. Monk, and how little about the people,—such being his own ideas as to the qualifications of the writer of that leading article,—and was about to start. But Mrs. Bunce arrested him by telling him that there was a man below who wanted to see him.

"What sort of a man, Mrs. Bunce?"

"He ain't a gentleman, sir."

"Did he give his name?"

"He did not, sir; but I know it's about money. I know the ways of them so well. I've seen this one's face before somewhere."

"You had better show him up," said Phineas. He knew well the business on which the man was come. The man wanted money for that bill which Laurence Fitzgibbon had sent afloat, and which Phineas had endorsed. Phineas had never as yet fallen so deeply into troubles of money as to make it necessary that he need refuse himself to any callers on that score, and he did not choose to do so now. Nevertheless he most heartily wished that he had left his lodgings for the club before the man had come. This was not the first he had heard of the bill being overdue and unpaid. The bill had been brought to him noted a month since, and then he had simply told the youth who brought it that he would see Mr. Fitzgibbon and have the matter settled. He had spoken to his friend Laurence, and Laurence had simply assured him that all should be made right in two days,—or, at furthest, by the end of a week. Since that time he had observed that his friend had been somewhat shy of speaking to him when no others were with them. Phineas would not have alluded to the bill had he and Laurence been alone together; but he had been quick enough to guess from his friend's manner that the matter was not settled. Now, no doubt, serious trouble was about to commence.

The visitor was a little man with grey hair and a white cravat, some sixty years of age, dressed in black, with a very decent hat,—which, on entering the room, he at once put down on the nearest chair,—with reference to whom, any judge on the subject would have concurred at first sight in the decision pronounced by Mrs. Bunce, though none but a judge very well used to sift the causes of his own conclusions could have given the reasons for that early decision. "He ain't a gentleman," Mrs. Bunce had said. And the man certainly was not a gentleman. The old man in the white cravat was very neatly dressed, and carried himself without any of that humility which betrays one class of uncertified aspirants to gentility, or of that assumed arrogance which is at once fatal to another class. But, nevertheless, Mrs. Bunce had seen at a glance that he was not a gentleman,—had seen, moreover, that such a man could have come only upon one mission. She was right there too. This visitor had come about money.

"About this bill, Mr. Finn," said the visitor, proceeding to take out of his breast coat-pocket a rather large leathern case, as he advanced up towards the fire. "My name is Clarkson, Mr. Finn. If I may venture so far, I'll take a chair."

"Certainly, Mr. Clarkson," said Phineas, getting up and pointing to a seat.

"Thankye, Mr. Finn, thankye. We shall be more comfortable doing business sitting, shan't we?" Whereupon the horrid little man drew

himself close in to the fire, and spreading out his leathern case upon his knees, began to turn over one suspicious bit of paper after another, as though he were uncertain in what part of his portfolio lay this identical bit which he was seeking. He seemed to be quite at home, and to feel that there was no ground whatever for hurry in such comfortable quarters. Phineas hated him at once,—with a hatred altogether unconnected with the difficulty which his friend Fitzgibbon had brought upon him.

"Here it is," said Mr. Clarkson at last, "Oh, dear me, dear me! the third of November, and here we are in March! I didn't think it was so bad as this;—I didn't indeed. This is very bad,—very bad! And for Parliament gents, too, who should be more punctual than anybody, because of the privilege. Shouldn't they now, Mr. Finn?"

"All men should be punctual, I suppose," said Phineas.

"Of course they should; of course they should. I always say to my gents, 'Be punctual, and I'll do anything for you.' But, perhaps, Mr. Finn, you can hand me a cheque for this amount, and then you and I will begin square."

"Indeed I cannot, Mr. Clarkson."

"Not hand me a cheque for it!"

"Upon my word, no."

"That's very bad;—very bad indeed. Then I suppose I must take the half, and renew for the remainder, though I don't like it;—I don't indeed."

"I can pay no part of that bill, Mr. Clarkson."

"Pay no part of it!" and Mr. Clarkson, in order that he might the better express his surprise, arrested his hand in the very act of poking his host's fire.

"If you'll allow me, I'll manage the fire," said Phineas, putting out his hand for the poker.

But Mr. Clarkson was fond of poking fires, and would not surrender the poker. "Pay no part of it!" he said again, holding the poker away from Phineas in his left hand. "Don't say that, Mr. Finn. Pray don't say that. Don't drive me to be severe. I don't like to be severe with my gents. I'll do anything, Mr. Finn, if you'll only be punctual."

"The fact is, Mr. Clarkson, I have never had one penny of consideration for that bill, and——"

"Oh, Mr. Finn! oh, Mr. Finn!" and then Mr. Clarkson had his will of the fire.

"I never had one penny of consideration for that bill," continued Phineas. "Of course I don't deny my responsibility."

"No, Mr. Finn; you can't deny that. Here it is;—Phineas Finn;—and everybody knows you, because you're a Parliament gent."

"I don't deny it. But I had no reason to suppose that I should be called upon for the money when I accommodated my friend, Mr.

Fitzgibbon, and I have not got it. That is the long and the short of it. I must see him and take care that arrangements are made."

"Arrangements!"

"Yes, arrangements for settling the bill."

"He hasn't got the money, Mr. Finn. You know that as well as I do."

"I know nothing about it, Mr. Clarkson."

"Oh yes, Mr. Finn; you know; you know."

"I tell you I know nothing about it," said Phineas, waxing angry.

"As to Mr. Fitzgibbon, he's the pleasantest gent that ever lived. Isn't he now? I've know'd him these ten years. I don't suppose that for ten years I've been without his name in my pocket. But, bless you, Mr. Finn, there's an end to everything. I shouldn't have looked at this bit of paper if it hadn't been for your signature. Of course not. You're just beginning, and it's natural you should want a little help. You'll find me always ready, if you'll only be punctual."

"I tell you again, sir, that I never had a shilling out of that for myself, and do not want any such help." Here Mr. Clarkson smiled sweetly. "I gave my name to my friend simply to oblige him."

"I like you Irish gents because you do hang together so close," said Mr. Clarkson.

"Simply to oblige him," continued Phineas. "As I said before, I know that I am responsible; but, as I said before also, I have not the means of taking up that bill. I will see Mr. Fitzgibbon, and let you know what we propose to do." Then Phineas got up from his seat and took his hat. It was full time that he should go down to his Committee. But Mr. Clarkson did not get up from his seat. "I'm afraid I must ask you to leave me now, Mr. Clarkson, as I have business down at the House."

"Business at the House never presses, Mr. Finn," said Mr. Clarkson. "That's the best of Parliament. I've known Parliament gents this thirty years and more. Would you believe it,—I've had a Prime Minister's name in that portfolio; that I have; and a Lord Chancellor's; that I have;—and an Archbishop's too. I know what Parliament is, Mr. Finn. Come, come; don't put me off with Parliament."

There he sat before the fire with his pouch open before him, and Phineas had no power of moving him. Could Phineas have paid him the money which was manifestly due to him on the bill, the man would of course have gone; but failing in that, Phineas could not turn him out. There was a black cloud on the young member's brow, and great anger at his heart,—against Fitzgibbon rather than against the man who was sitting there before him. "Sir," he said, "it is really imperative that I should go. I am pledged to an appointment at the House at twelve, and it wants now only a quarter. I regret that your interview with me should be so unsatisfactory, but I can only promise you that I will see Mr. Fitzgibbon."

"And when shall I call again, Mr. Finn?"

"Perhaps I had better write to you," said Phineas.

"Oh dear, no," said Mr. Clarkson. "I should much prefer to look in. Looking in is always best. We can get to understand one another in that way. Let me see. I daresay you're not particular. Suppose I say Sunday morning."

"Really, I could not see you on Sunday morning, Mr. Clarkson."

"Parliament gents ain't generally particular,—specially not among the Catholics," pleaded Mr. Clarkson.

"I am always engaged on Sundays," said Phineas.

"Suppose we say Monday,—or Tuesday. Tuesday morning at eleven. And do be punctual, Mr. Finn. At Tuesday morning I'll come, and then no doubt I shall find you ready." Whereupon Mr. Clarkson slowly put up his bills within his portfolio, and then, before Phineas knew where he was, had warmly shaken that poor dismayed member of Parliament by the hand. "Only do be punctual, Mr. Finn," he said, as he made his way down the stairs.

It was now twelve, and Phineas rushed off to a cab. He was in such a fervour of rage and misery that he could hardly think of his position, or what he had better do, till he got into the Committee room; and when there he could think of nothing else. He intended to go deeply into the question of potted peas, holding an equal balance between the assailed Government offices on the one hand, and the advocates of the potted peas on the other. The potters of the peas, who wanted to sell their article to the Crown, declared that an extensive,—perhaps we may say, an unlimited,—use of the article would save the whole army and navy from the scourges of scurvy, dyspepsia, and rheumatism, would be the best safeguard against typhus and other fevers, and would be an invaluable aid in all other maladies to which soldiers and sailors are peculiarly subject. The peas in question were grown on a large scale in Holstein, and their growth had been fostered with the special object of doing good to the British army and navy. The peas were so cheap that there would be a great saving in money,—and it really had seemed to many that the officials of the Horse Guards and the Admiralty had been actuated by some fiendish desire to deprive their men of salutary fresh vegetables, simply because they were of foreign growth. But the officials of the War Office and the Admiralty declared that the potted peas in question were hardly fit for swine. The motion for the Committee had been made by a gentleman of the opposition, and Phineas had been put upon it as an independent member. He had resolved to give to it all his mind, and, as far as he was concerned, to reach a just decision, in which there should be no favour shown to the Government side. New brooms are proverbial for thorough work, and in this Committee work Phineas was as yet a new broom. But, unfortunately, on this day his mind was so harassed that he could hardly understand what was

going on. It did not, perhaps, much signify, as the witnesses examined were altogether agricultural. They only proved the production of peas in Holstein,—a fact as to which Phineas had no doubt. The proof was naturally slow, as the evidence was given in German, and had to be translated into English. And the work of the day was much impeded by a certain member who unfortunately spoke German, who seemed to be fond of speaking German before his brethren of the Committee, and who was curious as to agriculture in Holstein generally. The chairman did not understand German, and there was a difficulty in checking this gentleman, and in making him understand that his questions were not relevant to the issue.

Phineas could not keep his mind during the whole afternoon from the subject of his misfortune. What should he do if this horrid man came to him once or twice a week? He certainly did owe the man the money. He must admit that to himself. The man no doubt was a dishonest knave who had discounted the bill probably at fifty per cent.; but, nevertheless, Phineas had made himself legally responsible for the amount. The privilege of the House prohibited him from arrest. He thought of that very often, but the thought only made him the more unhappy. Would it not be said, and might it not be said truly, that he had incurred this responsibility,—a responsibility which he was altogether unequal to answer,—because he was so protected? He did feel that a certain consciousness of his privilege had been present to him when he had put his name across the paper, and that there had been dishonesty in that very consciousness. And of what service would his privilege be to him, if this man could harass every hour of his life? The man was to be with him again in a day or two, and when the appointment had been proposed, he, Phineas, had not dared to negative it. And how was he to escape? As for paying the bill, that with him was altogether impossible. The man had told him,—and he had believed the man,—that payment by Fitzgibbon was out of the question. And yet Fitzgibbon was the son of a peer, whereas he was only the son of a country doctor! Of course Fitzgibbon must make some effort,—some great effort,—and have the thing settled. Alas, alas! He knew enough of the world already to feel that the hope was vain.

He went down from the Committee room into the House, and he dined at the House, and remained there until eight or nine at night; but Fitzgibbon did not come. He then went to the Reform Club, but he was not there. Both at the club and in the House many men spoke to him about the debate of the previous night, expressing surprise that he had not spoken,—making him more and more wretched. He saw Mr. Monk, but Mr. Monk was walking arm in arm with his colleague, Mr. Palliser, and Phineas could do no more than just speak to them. He thought that Mr. Monk's nod of recognition was very cold. That might be fancy, but it certainly was a fact that

Mr. Monk only nodded to him. He would tell Mr. Monk the truth, and then, if Mr. Monk chose to quarrel with him, he at any rate would take no step to renew their friendship.

From the Reform Club he went to the Shakspeare, a smaller club to which Fitzgibbon belonged,—and of which Phineas much wished to become a member,—and to which he knew that his friend resorted when he wished to enjoy himself thoroughly, and to be at ease in his inn. Men at the Shakspeare could do as they pleased. There were no politics there, no fashion, no stiffness, and no rules,—so men said; but that was hardly true. Everybody called everybody by his Christian name, and members smoked all over the house. They who did not belong to the Shakspeare thought it an Elysium upon earth; and they who did, believed it to be among Pandemoniums the most pleasant. Phineas called at the Shakspeare, and was told by the porter that Mr. Fitzgibbon was upstairs. He was shown into the strangers' room, and in five minutes his friend came down to him.

"I want you to come down to the Reform with me," said Phineas.

"By jingo, my dear fellow, I'm in the middle of a rubber of whist."

"There has been a man with me about that bill."

"What;—Clarkson?"

"Yes, Clarkson," said Phineas.

"Don't mind him," said Fitzgibbon.

"That's nonsense. How am I to help minding him. I must mind him. He is coming to me again on Tuesday morning."

"Don't see him."

"How can I help seeing him?"

"Make them say you're not at home."

"He has made an appointment. He has told me that he'll never leave me alone. He'll be the death of me if this is not settled."

"It shall be settled, my dear fellow. I'll see about it. I'll see about it and write you a line. You must excuse me now, because those fellows are waiting. I'll have it all arranged."

Again as Phineas went home he thoroughly wished that he had not seceded from Mr. Low.

CHAPTER XXII.

LADY BALDOCK AT HOME.

ABOUT the middle of March Lady Baldock came up from Baddingham to London, coerced into doing so, as Violet Effingham declared, in thorough opposition to all her own tastes, by the known wishes of her friends and relatives. Her friends and relatives, so Miss Effingham insinuated, were unanimous in wishing that Lady Baldock should remain at Baddingham Park, and therefore,—that wish having been indiscreetly expressed,—she had put herself to great inconvenience,

and had come to London in March. "Gustavus will go mad," said Violet to Lady Laura. The Gustavus in question was the Lord Baldock of the present generation, Miss Effingham's Lady Baldock being the peer's mother. "Why does not Lord Baldock take a house himself?" asked Lady Laura. "Don't you know, my dear," Violet answered, "how much we Baddingham people think of money? We don't like being vexed and driven mad, but even that is better than keeping up two households." As regarded Violet, the injury arising from Lady Baldock's early migration was very great, for she was thus compelled to move from Grosvenor Place to Lady Baldock's house in Berkeley Square. "As you are so fond of being in London, Augusta and I have made up our minds to come up before Easter," Lady Baldock had written to her.

"I shall go to her now," Violet had said to her friend, "because I have not quite made up my mind as to what I will do for the future."

"Marry Oswald, and be your own mistress."

"I mean to be my own mistress without marrying Oswald, though I don't see my way quite clearly as yet. I think I shall set up a little house of my own, and let the world say what it pleases. I suppose they couldn't make me out to be a lunatic."

"I shouldn't wonder if they were to try," said Lady Laura.

"They could not prevent me in any other way. But I am in the dark as yet, and so I shall be obedient and go to my aunt."

Miss Effingham went to Berkeley Square, and Phineas Finn was introduced to Lady Baldock. He had been often in Grosvenor Place, and had seen Violet frequently. Mr. Kennedy gave periodical dinners, —once a week,—to which everybody went who could get an invitation; and Phineas had been a guest more than once. Indeed, in spite of his miseries he had taken to dining out a good deal, and was popular as an eater of dinners. He could talk when wanted, and did not talk too much, was pleasant in manners and appearance, and had already achieved a certain recognised position in London life. Of those who knew him intimately, not one in twenty were aware from whence he came, what was his parentage, or what his means of living. He was a member of Parliament, a friend of Mr. Kennedy's, was intimate with Mr. Monk, though an Irishman did not as a rule herd with other Irishmen, and was the right sort of person to have at your house. Some people said he was a cousin of Lord Brentford's, and others declared that he was Lord Chiltern's earliest friend. There he was, however, with a position gained, and even Lady Baldock asked him to her house.

Lady Baldock had evenings. People went to her house, and stood about the room and on the stairs, talked to each other for half an hour, and went away. In these March days there was no crowding, but still there were always enough of people there to show that Lady Baldock was successful. Why people should have gone to Lady

Baldock's I cannot explain ;—but there are houses to which people go without any reason. Phineas received a little card asking him to go, and he always went.

"I think you like my friend, Mr. Finn," Lady Laura said to Miss Effingham, after the first of these evenings.

"Yes, I do. I like him decidedly."

"So do I. I should hardly have thought that you would have taken a fancy to him."

"I hardly know what you call taking a fancy," said Violet. "I am not quite sure I like to be told that I have taken a fancy for a young man."

"I mean no offence, my dear."

"Of course you don't. But, to speak truth, I think I have rather taken a fancy to him. There is just enough of him, but not too much. I don't mean materially,—in regard to his inches ; but as to his mental belongings. I hate a stupid man who can't talk to me, and I hate a clever man who talks me down. I don't like a man who is too lazy to make any effort to shine ; but I particularly dislike the man who is always striving for effect. I abominate a humble man, but yet I love to perceive that a man acknowledges the superiority of my sex, and youth, and all that kind of thing."

"You want to be flattered without plain flattery."

"Of course I do. A man who would tell me that I am pretty, unless he is over seventy, ought to be kicked out of the room. But a man who can't show me that he thinks me so without saying a word about it, is a lout. Now in all those matters, your friend, Mr. Finn, seems to know what he is about. In other words, he makes himself pleasant, and, therefore, one is glad to see him."

"I suppose you do not mean to fall in love with him ?"

"Not that I know of, my dear. But when I do, I'll be sure to give you notice."

I fear that there was more of earnestness in Lady Laura's last question than Miss Effingham had supposed. She had declared to herself over and over again that she had never been in love with Phineas Finn. She had acknowledged to herself, before Mr. Kennedy had asked her hand in marriage, that there had been danger,—that she could have learned to love the man if such love would not have been ruinous to her,—that the romance of such a passion would have been pleasant to her. She had gone farther than this, and had said to herself that she would have given way to that romance, and would have been ready to accept such love if offered to her, had she not put it out of her own power to marry a poor man by her generosity to her brother. Then she had thrust the thing aside, and had clearly understood,—she thought that she had clearly understood,—that life for her must be a matter of business. Was it not the case with nine out of every ten among mankind, with nine hundred and ninety-nine out

of every thousand, that life must be a matter of business and not of romance? Of course she could not marry Mr. Finn, knowing, as she did, that neither of them had a shilling. Of all men in the world she esteemed Mr. Kennedy the most, and when these thoughts were passing through her mind, she was well aware that he would ask her to be his wife. Had she not resolved that she would accept the offer, she would not have gone to Loughlinter. Having put aside all romance as unfitted to her life, she could, she thought, do her duty as Mr. Kennedy's wife. She would teach herself to love him. Nay,—she had taught herself to love him. She was at any rate so sure of her own heart that she would never give her husband cause to rue the confidence he placed in her. And yet there was something sore within her when she thought that Phineas Finn was becoming fond of Violet Effingham.

It was Lady Baldock's second evening, and Phineas came to the house at about eleven o'clock. At this time he had encountered a second and a third interview with Mr. Clarkson, and had already failed in obtaining any word of comfort from Laurence Fitzgibbon about the bill. It was clear enough now that Laurence felt that they were both made safe by their privilege, and that Mr. Clarkson should be treated as you treat the organ-grinders. They are a nuisance and must be endured. But the nuisance is not so great but what you can live in comfort,—if only you are not too sore as to the annoyance. "My dear fellow," Laurence had said to him, "I have had Clarkson almost living in my rooms. He used to drink nearly a pint of sherry a day for me. All I looked to was that I didn't live there at the same time. If you wish it, I'll send in the sherry." This was very bad, and Phineas tried to quarrel with his friend; but he found that it was difficult to quarrel with Laurence Fitzgibbon.

But though on this side Phineas was very miserable, on another side he had obtained great comfort. Mr. Monk and he were better friends than ever. "As to what Turnbull says about me in the House," Mr. Monk had said, laughing; "he and I understand each other perfectly. I should like to see you on your legs, but it is just as well, perhaps, that you have deferred it. We shall have the real question on immediately after Easter, and then you'll have plenty of opportunities." Phineas had explained how he had attempted, how he had failed, and how he had suffered;—and Mr. Monk had been generous in his sympathy. "I know all about it," said he, "and have gone through it all myself. The more respect you feel for the House, the more satisfaction you will have in addressing it when you have mastered this difficulty."

The first person who spoke to Phineas at Lady Baldock's was Miss Fitzgibbon, Laurence's sister. Aspasia Fitzgibbon was a warm woman as regarded money, and as she was moreover a most discreet spinster, she was made welcome by Lady Baldock, in spite of the well-known iniquities of her male relatives. "Mr. Finn," said she,

"how d'ye do? I want to say a word to ye. Just come here into the corner." Phineas, not knowing how to escape, did retreat into the corner with Miss Fitzgibbon. "Tell me now, Mr. Finn;—have ye been lending money to Larrence?"

"No; I have lent him no money," said Phineas, much astonished by the question.

"Don't. That's my advice to ye. Don't. On any other matter Larrence is the best creature in the world,—but he's bad to lend money to. You ain't in any hobble with him, then?"

"Well;—nothing to speak of. What makes you ask?"

"Then you are in a hobble? Dear, dear! I never saw such a man as Larrence;—never. Good-bye. I wouldn't do it again, if I were you;—that's all." Then Miss Fitzgibbon came out of the corner and made her way downstairs.

Phineas immediately afterwards came across Miss Effingham. "I did not know," said she, "that you and the divine Aspasia were such close allies."

"We are the dearest friends in the world, but she has taken my breath away now."

"May a body be told how she has done that?" Violet asked.

"Well, no; I'm afraid not, even though the body be Miss Effingham. It was a profound secret;—really a secret concerning a third person, and she began about it just as though she were speaking about the weather!"

"How charming! I do so like her. You haven't heard, have you, that Mr. Ratler proposed to her the other day."

"No!"

"But he did;—at least, so she tells everybody. She said she'd take him if he would promise to get her brother's salary doubled."

"Did she tell you?"

"No; not me. And of course I don't believe a word of it. I suppose Barrington Erle made up the story. Are you going out of town next week, Mr. Finn?" The week next to this was Easter-week. "I heard you were going into Northamptonshire."

"From Lady Laura?"

"Yes;—from Lady Laura."

"I intend to spend three days with Lord Chiltern at Willingford. It is an old promise. I am going to ride his horses,—that is, if I am able to ride them."

"Take care what you are about, Mr. Finn;—they say his horses are so dangerous!"

"I'm rather good at falling, I flatter myself."

"I know that Lord Chiltern rides anything he can sit, so long as it is some animal that nobody else will ride. It was always so with him. He is so odd; is he not?"

Phineas knew, of course, that Lord Chiltern had more than once

asked Violet Effingham to be his wife,—and he believed that she, from her intimacy with Lady Laura, must know that he knew it. He had also heard Lady Laura express a very strong wish that, in spite of these refusals, Violet might even yet become her brother's wife. And Phineas also knew that Violet Effingham was becoming, in his own estimation, the most charming woman of his acquaintance. How was he to talk to her about Lord Chiltern?

"He is odd," said Phineas; "but he is an excellent fellow,—whom his father altogether misunderstands."

"Exactly,—just so; I am so glad to hear you say that,—you who have never had the misfortune to have anything to do with a bad set. Why don't you tell Lord Brentford? Lord Brentford would listen to you."

"To me?"

"Yes;—of course he would,—for you are just the link that is wanting. You are Chiltern's intimate friend, and you are also the friend of big-wigs and Cabinet Ministers."

"Lord Brentford would put me down at once if I spoke to him on such a subject."

"I am sure he would not. You are too big to be put down, and no man can really dislike to hear his son well spoken of by those who are well spoken of themselves. Won't you try, Mr. Finn?" Phineas said that he would think of it,—that he would try if any fit opportunity could be found. "Of course you know how intimate I have been with the Standishes," said Violet; "that Laura is to me a sister, and that Oswald used to be almost a brother."

"Why do not you speak to Lord Brentford;—you, who are his favourite?"

"There are reasons, Mr. Finn. Besides, how can any girl come forward and say that she knows the disposition of any man? You can live with Lord Chiltern, and see what he is made of, and know his thoughts, and learn what is good in him, and also what is bad. After all, how is any girl really to know anything of a man's life?"

"If I can do anything, Miss Effingham, I will," said Phineas.

"And then we shall all of us be so grateful to you," said Violet, with her sweetest smile.

Phineas, retreating from this conversation, stood for a while alone, thinking of it. Had she spoken thus of Lord Chiltern because she did love him or because she did not? And the sweet commendations which had fallen from her lips upon him,—him, Phineas Finn,—were they compatible with anything like a growing partiality for himself, or were they incompatible with any such feeling? Had he most reason to be comforted or to be discomfited by what had taken place? It seemed hardly possible to his imagination that Violet Effingham should love such a nobody as he. And yet he had had fair evidence that one standing as high in the world as Violet Effing-

ham would fain have loved him could she have followed the dictates of her heart. He had trembled when he had first resolved to declare his passion to Lady Laura,—fearing that she would scorn him as being presumptuous. But there had been no cause for such fear as that. He had declared his love, and she had not thought him to be presumptuous. That now was ages ago,—eight months since; and Lady Laura had become a married woman. Since he had become so warmly alive to the charms of Violet Effingham he had determined, with stern propriety, that a passion for a married woman was disgraceful. Such love was in itself a sin, even though it was accompanied by the severest forbearance and the most rigid propriety of conduct. No;—Lady Laura had done wisely to check the growing feeling of partiality which she had admitted; and now that she was married, he would be as wise as she. It was clear to him that, as regarded his own heart, the way was open to him for a new enterprise. But what if he were to fail again, and be told by Violet, when he declared his love, that she had just engaged herself to Lord Chiltern!

"What were you and Violet talking about so eagerly?" said Lady Laura to him, with a smile that, in its approach to laughter, almost betrayed its mistress.

"We were talking about your brother."

"You are going to him, are you not?"

"Yes; I leave London on Sunday night;—but only for a day or two."

"Has he any chance there, do you think?"

"What, with Miss Effingham?"

"Yes;—with Violet. Sometimes I think she loves him."

"How can I say? In such a matter you can judge better than I can do. One woman with reference to another can draw the line between love and friendship. She certainly likes Lord Chiltern."

"Oh, I believe she loves him. I do indeed. But she fears him. She does not quite understand how much there is of tenderness with that assumed ferocity. And Oswald is so strange, so unwise, so impolitic, that though he loves her better than all the world beside, he will not sacrifice even a turn of a word to win her. When he asks her to marry him, he almost flies at her throat, as an angry debtor who applies for instant payment. Tell him, Mr. Finn, never to give it over;—and teach him that he should be soft with her. Tell him, also, that in her heart she likes him. One woman, as you say, knows another woman; and I am certain he would win her if he would only be gentle with her." Then again, before they parted, Lady Laura told him that this marriage was the dearest wish of her heart, and that there would be no end to her gratitude if Phineas could do anything to promote it. All which again made our hero unhappy.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SUNDAY IN GROSVENOR PLACE.

Mr. KENNEDY, though he was a most scrupulously attentive member of Parliament, was a man very punctual to hours and rules in his own house,—and liked that his wife should be as punctual as himself. Lady Laura, who in marrying him had firmly resolved that she would do her duty to him in all ways, even though the ways might sometimes be painful,—and had been perhaps more punctilious in this respect than she might have been had she loved him heartily,—was not perhaps quite so fond of accurate regularity as her husband ; and thus, by this time, certain habits of his had become rather bonds than habits to her. He always had prayers at nine, and breakfasted at a quarter past nine, let the hours on the night before have been as late as they might before the time for rest had come. After breakfast he would open his letters in his study, but he liked her to be with him, and desired to discuss with her every application he got from a constituent. He had his private secretary in a room apart, but he thought that everything should be filtered to his private secretary through his wife. He was very anxious that she herself should superintend the accounts of their own private expenditure, and had taken some trouble to teach her an excellent mode of book-keeping. He had recommended to her a certain course of reading,—which was pleasant enough ; ladies like to receive such recommendations ; but Mr. Kennedy, having drawn out the course, seemed to expect that his wife should read the books he had named, and, worse still, that she should read them in the time he had allocated for the work. This, I think, was tyranny. Then the Sundays became very wearisome to Lady Laura. Going to church twice, she had learnt, would be a part of her duty ; and though in her father's household attendance at church had never been very strict, she had made up her mind to this cheerfully. But Mr. Kennedy expected also that he and she should always dine together on Sundays, that there should be no guests, and that there should be no evening company. After all, the demand was not very severe, but yet she found that it operated injuriously upon her comfort. The Sundays were very wearisome to her, and made her feel that her lord and master was—her lord and master. She made an effort or two to escape, but the efforts were all in vain. He never spoke a cross word to her. He never gave a stern command. But yet he had his way. "I won't say that reading a novel on a Sunday is a sin," he said ; "but we must at any rate admit that it is a matter on which men disagree, that many of the best of men are against such occupation on Sunday, and that to abstain is to be on the safe side." So the novels were put away, and Sunday afternoon with the long evening became rather a stumbling-block to Lady Laura.

Those two hours, moreover, with her husband in the morning became very wearisome to her. At first she had declared that it would be her greatest ambition to help her husband in his work, and she had read all the letters from the MacNabs and MacFies, asking to be made gaugers and landing-waiters, with an assumed interest. But the work palled upon her very quickly. Her quick intellect discovered soon that there was nothing in it which she really did. It was all form and verbiage, and pretence at business. Her husband went through it all with the utmost patience, reading every word, giving orders as to every detail, and conscientiously doing that which he conceived he had undertaken to do. But Lady Laura wanted to meddle with high politics, to discuss reform bills, to assist in putting up Mr. This and in putting down my Lord That. Why should she waste her time in doing that which the lad in the next room, who was called a private secretary, could do as well?

Still she would obey. Let the task be as hard as it might, she would obey. If he counselled her to do this or that, she would follow his counsel,—because she owed him so much. If she had accepted the half of all his wealth without loving him, she owed him the more on that account. But she knew,—she could not but know,—that her intellect was brighter than his; and might it not be possible for her to lead him? Then she made efforts to lead her husband, and found that he was as stiff-necked as an ox. Mr. Kennedy was not, perhaps, a clever man; but he was a man who knew his own way, and who intended to keep it.

"I have got a headache, Robert," she said to him one Sunday after luncheon. "I think I will not go to church this afternoon."

"It is not serious, I hope."

"Oh dear no. Don't you know how one feels sometimes that one has got a head; and when that is the case one's armchair is the best place."

"I am not sure of that," said Mr. Kennedy.

"If I went to church I should not attend," said Lady Laura.

"The fresh air would do you more good than anything else, and we could walk across the park."

"Thank you;—I won't go out again to-day." This she said with something almost of crossness in her manner, and Mr. Kennedy went to the afternoon service by himself.

Lady Laura when she was left alone began to think of her position. She was not more than four or five months married, and she was becoming very tired of her life. Was it not also true that she was becoming tired of her husband? She had twice told Phineas Finn that of all men in the world she esteemed Mr. Kennedy the most. She did not esteem him less now. She knew no point or particle in which he did not do his duty with accuracy. But no person can live happily with another,—not even with a brother or a sister or a friend,—simply upon esteem. All the virtues in the

calendar, though they exist on each side, will not make a man and woman happy together, unless there be sympathy. Lady Laura was beginning to find out that there was a lack of sympathy between herself and her husband.

She thought of this till she was tired of thinking of it, and then, wishing to divert her mind, she took up the book that was lying nearest to her hand. It was a volume of a new novel which she had been reading on the previous day, and now, without much thought about it, she went on with her reading. There came to her, no doubt, some dim, half-formed idea that, as she was freed from going to church by the plea of a headache, she was also absolved by the same plea from other Sunday hindrances. A child, when it is ill, has buttered toast and a picture-book instead of bread-and-milk and lessons. In this way, Lady Laura conceived herself to be entitled to her novel.

While she was reading it, there came a knock at the door, and Barrington Erle was shown upstairs. Mr. Kennedy had given no orders against Sunday visitors, but had simply said that Sunday visiting was not to his taste. Barrington, however, was Lady Laura's cousin, and people must be very strict if they can't see their cousins on Sunday. Lady Laura soon lost her headache altogether in the animation of discussing the chances of the new Reform Bill with the Prime Minister's private secretary; and had left her chair, and was standing by the table with the novel in her hand, protesting this and denying that, expressing infinite confidence in Mr. Monk, and violently denouncing Mr. Turnbull, when her husband returned from church and came up into the drawing-room. Lady Laura had forgotten her headache altogether, and had in her composition none of that thoughtfulness of hypocrisy which would have taught her to moderate her political feeling at her husband's return.

"I do declare," she said, "that if Mr. Turnbull opposes the Government measure now, because he can't have his own way in everything, I will never again put my trust in any man who calls himself a popular leader."

"You never should," said Barrington Erle.

"That's all very well for you, Barrington, who are an aristocratic Whig of the old official school, and who call yourself a Liberal simply because Fox was a Liberal a hundred years ago. My heart's in it."

"Heart should never have anything to do with politics; should it?" said Erle, turning round to Mr. Kennedy.

Mr. Kennedy did not wish to discuss the matter on a Sunday, nor yet did he wish to say before Barrington Erle that he thought it wrong to do so. And he was desirous of treating his wife in some way as though she were an invalid,—that she thereby might be, as it were, punished; but he did not wish to do this in such a way that Barrington should be aware of the punishment.

"Laura had better not disturb herself about it now," he said.

"How is a person to help being disturbed?" said Lady Laura, laughing.

"Well, well; we won't mind all that now," said Mr. Kennedy, turning away. Then he took up the novel which Lady Laura had just laid down from her hand, and, having looked at it, carried it aside, and placed it on a book-shelf which was remote from them. Lady Laura watched him as he did this, and the whole course of her husband's thoughts on the subject was open to her at once. She regretted the novel, and she regretted also the political discussion. Soon afterwards Barrington Erle went away, and the husband and wife were alone together.

"I am glad that your head is so much better," said he. He did not intend to be severe, but he spoke with a gravity of manner which almost amounted to severity.

"Yes; it is," she said. "Barrington's coming in cheered me up."

"I am sorry that you should have wanted cheering."

"Don't you know what I mean, Robert?"

"No; I do not think that I do, exactly."

"I suppose your head is stronger. You do not get that feeling of dazed, helpless imbecility of brain, which hardly amounts to headache, but which yet—is almost as bad."

"Imbecility of brain may be worse than headache, but I don't think it can produce it."

"Well, well;—I don't know how to explain it."

"Headache comes, I think, always from the stomach, even when produced originally by nervous affections. But imbecility of the brain—"

"Oh, Robert, I am so sorry that I used the word."

"I see that it did not prevent your reading," he said, after a pause.

"Not such reading as that. I was up to nothing better."

Then there was another pause.

"I won't deny that it may be a prejudice," he said, "but I confess that the use of novels in my own house on Sundays is a pain to me. My mother's ideas on the subject are very strict, and I cannot think that it is bad for a son to hang on to the teaching of his mother." This he said in the most serious tone which he could command.

"I don't know why I took it up," said Lady Laura. "Simply, I believe, because it was there. I will avoid doing so for the future."

"Do, my dear," said the husband. "I shall be obliged and grateful if you will remember what I have said." Then he left her, and she sat alone, first in the dusk and then in the dark, for two hours, doing nothing. Was this to be the life which she had procured for herself by marrying Mr. Kennedy of Loughlinter? If it was harsh and unendurable in London, what would it be in the country?

